

FOREGLEAMS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

"When the Shadows flee away,"

BEREAN SERIES OF BIBLE STUDIES

But Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.—1 Pet. 3: 15.

"Glory to God in the Highest"



"On Earth, Peace, Good Will Toward Men"

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FOREWORD

THIS work is sent out to the glory of God and that it may be a helping hand to all who desire to understand God's Word. The greater part of the Bible has been, until recently, as a sealed book, but we are now living in the time in which it was promised that the seals should be removed, and the wise should understand; not the worldliwise but those wise toward God, those who hunger and thirst for the truth in their hearts.

It is the privilege of all such to rejoice in the clearer revealing of God's great purpose in respect to this poor sin-cursed world.

The object of the work is to direct the thinking mind to the only source of information regarding these matters. To this end a series of Questions with Scriptural Answers has been arranged after each subject, which cannot fail to be interesting and helpful to those who will carefully and prayerfully turn to the texts quoted. This feature will not only be found useful for personal information, but also in respect to the many questions, for the solution of which, children naturally look to their parents. "Seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you."

The answers to the Questions are not supposed to be exhaustive, but are intended to stir up the mind to search the Scriptures, so that faith may be based upon God's Word and that the reader may be "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is within him."—1 Pet. 3:15.

The hope is entertained that this feature of Questions and Biblical Answers after each chapter will be the means of encouraging Home Circle Bible Studies, and anything which the Publishers can do in the way of assisting in the establishing of such classes will be esteemed a privilege in the Lord's service.

Should there be any matters not quite plain, readers are invited to communicate with us, when we shall be glad to render any assistance possible in making Bible research both interesting and profitable. The volume goes forth on its mission, which we trust is a little part in the sending out the light of truth, so much needed by this dark world of sin, with prayers for the Lord's blessing and that He will guide its course as He has guided in its production and publication.

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STUDY I.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN CREATION.

To Know God and His Purpose Regarding Man.

To every thinking mind questions will arise, and all questions of honest purpose and pure motive should find encouragement among real searchers for truth. There is no nobler science than that which aims at an understanding of the problems of life, why we are here, God's will for us, and what our future prospects.

Possibly many readers have seen the amusing picture of the puppy in surprise at the sight of the chicken just come out of its shell, and who in perplexity seems to exclaim, "Holloa, who are you." Mankind is not even allowed to come into consciousness in such simplicity, for he is born and bred in an atmosphere of mysticism and as soon as the little mind is open to receive a thought, it is filled with unreasoning dogmas and theories, such as that of inherent immortality, namely, that the life begun can never cease, and that it must be determined in the space of a few brief years whether that eternity will be in a hell of woe or a heaven of bliss. This is the mild view, for the Calvinist declares that there is no choice but that prior to birth it had been decreed that the life was doomed to hell or selected for heaven.

It has been contended that God has been trying to convert the world, that He has done His best to draw all men to Him, but that Satan has interfered with His plan of salvation, and thus the present condition of sin and trouble.

How hopeless would be the position if such were the case. If so, we should have to conclude that Satan was more powerful than God and all hope of perfect conditions of life would be lost. No, this has been a great mistake, which we shall see as we proceed to trace the reason for the present distress, sin, sorrow, trouble, and death, then note the remedy, and view the completed plan, in the restoration of man to the image of God.

We do not claim originality or any special gift in offering these explanations. It was promised in the Bible itself that at the time of the end of knowledge should be increased, and that the light would shine more and more unto the perfect day.—Dan.12:4;2 Pet.1:19.

The Bible has been greatly misrepresented and misunderstood. Men have generally turned to the Bible with preconceived ideas, which they sought to sustain, instead of coming with open mind to see what the Book really does teach.

Now we are living in the "time of the end," and through current events and general enlightenment the Bible is opening up, and God's purpose and plan of salvation is being revealed, and to every reasonable thoughtful mind, "it satisfies their longings as nothing else can do," for it is all that can be desired, and is just what could be expected from a God of Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power.

And still new beauties shall we see

And still increasing light.

The great difficulty is to divest the mind of all the errors of sect and creed, which have come down to us from the dark ages, when there was so little study of the Bible, when the people had to accept what was prepared for them by the clergy class, and were not allowed to put any meaning to the Scriptures, on their own account.

Many still believe that this earth is to be burned up notwithstanding the plain statement of Scripture

that the earth abideth for ever." (Eccles. 1:4.) The difficulty is that symbolic Scriptures have been taken in a literal way, but when we learn to "rightly divide the word of truth," that is, to note what is literal, what is symbol, what is given as typical and what is parabolic, then we see harmony and beauty and learn that God has promised that the earth is "established that it cannot be moved for ever," and so many promises,—to Abraham (Acts 7:5) to Israel (Amos 9:15) and Noah (Gen. 8:21) and others could never be fulfilled if this earth was to be destroyed. On the contrary the prophecies abound in expressions concerning the perfecting of the earth, when it shall bring forth fruit free from blight, when there shall be no more thorns and thistles and weeds and pests, and when "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest," and "all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep." When the Lord's prayer shall be answered, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

"INSTEAD."

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the Fir tree,
 Instead of the Brier the Myrtle shall spring,
 Back to its primeval freshness and beauty
 God will creation triumphantly bring."

There are, however, expressions in the Scriptures which, taken apart from their connections, would apparently teach that this earth will be burned up—destroyed—and as Bible students we have no right nor desire to ignore any passages of God's word. It must be accepted as a whole, and when we reach the truth on any subject we will find the harmony of the Bible references to the matter.

In 2 Pet. 3:10 we read—"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

While at first sight this seems a clear statement of the destruction of the earth, on referring to the previous verses, particularly 5, 6 and 7, we note that the apostle says, that one world has already been destroyed at the time of the Flood—"the heavens and the earth being overflowed with water perished."

We know that it was neither the literal heavens nor literal earth which then passed away, and it is clear that it is a similar world or "heavens and earth" which will be destroyed in the fiery time of trouble of which the apostle speaks.

The Bible often uses the word "earth" as indicating "the social arrangement"—the people on the earth, and the word "heavens" as referring to the spiritual controlling powers or ecclesiastical arrangements, so that the "heavens and the earth" refer to the religious and social phases of the world, or age, or period of time.

Psalms 96:11 exclaims, "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad." All can at once see that the Psalmist did not expect the inanimate earth to be glad, or the stars, sun and moon to rejoice. No, but he called upon the whole world to worship the Lord; the heavens, or spiritual arrangements and the earth, the social or civil portion of the existing order of things.

In God's great purpose, this earth is to be perfected, and filled with a perfect human race living in harmony with God's righteous requirements. That will be as the prophet expresses it "when this land that was desolate shall become like the Garden of Eden" or Paradise restored.

Three Worlds.

Scriptural history, from the fall of man into sin to the time when he shall be again restored to God's favour, through the work of the Great Mediator clearly marks out three distinct worlds, or ages, or

epochs of time:—(1) "The World That Was," or "The Old World;" (2) "The Present Evil World," or "The World That Now Is;" and (3) "The World to Come Wherein Dwelleth Righteousness."

In each of these great epochs God's dealings with His creatures have been somewhat different, though each is a development in the great plan for blessing all the families of the earth.

The first World was a period of 1656 years, dating from the creation of man to the Flood. During this period sin entered and increased rapidly until it was wisdom on God's part to use the occasion of the great flood, caused by the breaking of the vapoury envelope which, until that time, surrounded the earth, to take the corrupted race away, and start the human family again, with pure Adamic seed represented in Noah and his family, of whom we read they were perfect in their generations (Gen. 6:9, and Gen. 7:1), while the race generally had been corrupted by materialised angels marrying the daughters of men.—Genesis 6; Jude 6; 1 Pet. 3.19,20.

It is interesting to note the connection of angels with the human creation. May we even cast our minds back to the time when God was alone. The first of all creation was then brought forth—the Logos—"the first born of every creature." (Col. 1:15). The Son then heartily enters into the work of creation and "by him were all things created which are in heaven and that are in earth."—Col. 1:16; John 1:1-3 (Diaglott); John 1:10.

It is written, after the angels were created and man brought forth, that "His delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. 8:31.) The angels having been next created it would appear that they too, heartily entered into the Great Creator's purpose in regard to this planet, and the time having arrived when the earth had gradually developed into con-

dition to support the human family, these angelic "sons of God" are represented as "shouting for joy." Man was produced and the Divine blessing pronounced. Man, too, was to co-operate with God and fill the earth and subdue it—make it all a paradise. Then came what was apparently a calamity—sin entered, and death by sin. Death was the promised penalty, and God's word cannot be broken. Justice condemned the sinner and claimed his life. However, Wisdom and Love co-operated to devise means of satisfying Justice, and he whose "delights were with the sons of men" in prospect, volunteers not only to pay the penalty and liberate from the condemnation of death, but also to restore man to the perfect condition in heart, mind and body. The hand of Justice, stretched forth to slay our first parents, was then withdrawn, and they were permitted to bring forth children in their condemned state. Some may be inclined to demur at this, and think that it was not just to condemn all for one man's sin, but a little reflection may convince these that it was not only just, but it was wise and the kindest arrangement. Had it been that all were created perfect and placed on trial as our first parents were, without any experience of evil, it is hardly likely that many would have done any better than Adam. Then, too, for each sinner Justice would require a ransom. Man for man, how many Redeemers would have been required? Now, all come into the world condemned already, and experience the results of sin without the responsibility of life and death. The plan of God then provides through the Ransomer an opportunity for all—a better opportunity than Adam had because of this added experience. Few as yet have had such opportunity, but the rest will assuredly have it "in due time," of which we hope to speak a little further on.

Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin.

The sentence pronounced, God turned man out of Eden, and prevented him eating the trees of life lest he should not die. It seemed as though God's purpose had been thwarted by Satan, but God would not have allowed Satan to tempt, if He had not seen how to turn it all to good account. Some of the angels, it would appear, became affected by Satan, and were disloyal to God. These associated with man in sin and produced the immoral conditions of Genesis 6. Man had turned away from God, and God left him to get his experience of evil. The angels with Satan ruled in that age, and that was the "heavens" the spiritual controlling powers which passed away with the Flood. The social arrangement in the world was the "earth," which was also destroyed at the same time.

The present "heavens and earth" date from the Flood down to the second coming of Christ. Satan has been "the prince of this world" (John 14:30), or of this age or dispensation, and the prince of the power of the air. (Eph. 2:2.) He is the prince of demons—fallen angels—and he has succeeded in foisting upon man numerous false religions and systems of error and deceptions—Buddhism, Confucianism, Mahomedanism, Theosophy, Spiritism and many others with more appearance of, and claiming to be Christian, and therefore the more successful in deceiving those in what are called Christian lands. There is the great Papal system, as well as the varied sects of Protestantism, all of which, while containing true Christian people and much that is true and beautiful, are so confused with error, erroneous dogmas and creeds, that they have hindered the progress of truth, and the darkness has eclipsed the light, so that God is misrepresented and the Bible misunderstood. Thus the "heavens" of this world consist of the ecclesiastical

systems, the spiritual or religious organisations while the "earth" refers to the social organisations governments and institutions. During this long period of time, man has been gaining an experience as to what it is to be under the dominion of sin, estranged from the great Creator. Many noble efforts have been made to better the conditions of life and morals but all have failed to attain any measure of success worthy of mention and the world to-day is as wicked as ever.

The climax, however, is at hand, and this will be sufficient together with the past experience of Satan's rule, to humble man and help him to look to the only source of remedy for earth's distress—"The desire of all nations." Thus in the fire of the great day, all institutions, whether religious or civil, which are not founded on righteousness, will be overturned and Christ's kingdom will be ushered in and Satan's kingdom will go out and then will commence the new era—the third great dispensation—the world to come wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The present evil world, with its heavens and earth, having passed away, Rev. 21:1-4 describes the work to be accomplished under the new spiritual control and social arrangements. Isa. 65:17-25 also predicts the happy circumstances of that heavenly kingdom.

What a contrast to the present evil world, with its spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. The prince of this present evil world must be bound and instead Christ shall be King over all the earth in that day. Now we call the proud happy; yea they that tempt God are even delivered (Mal. 3:15) but "in His days shall the righteous flourish." (Psa. 72:7.) Instead of the wicked being in great power spreading himself like a green bay tree (Psa. 37:

35) judgment will he lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet.—Isa. 27:17.

Instead of evil spirits co-operating with Satan their prince for tempting men away from God in sin and evil, the saints, the church, the joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17) will reign with Christ for the blessing and uplift of the human race. (Gal. 3:16, and verse 29.) The new heavens then will be Christ and the Church, and the new earth will be with Jerusalem as its capital and the Jewish (Ancient Worthies, Heb. 11) people will be the earthly representatives of the kingdom of God. The Law shall go forth out of Zion (the Church with Christ as its Head) and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. "That as sin has reigned unto death even so might grace reign unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom, 5:21.

It must not, however be expected that all sin will be immediately stamped out, but that will be gradually accomplished for "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:25, 26.) While sin exists death must be the consequence, but when all wilful transgressors—the incorrigible—have gone into death, then death itself shall die. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things (of the present evil world) are passed away.—Rev. 21:4.

"Behold I make all things new."

Berean Questions.

1. Is it right to question God's purpose, and to expect a reasonable answer to such from the Word of God?

Answer.—Isa. 1:18; Amos 3:7; Psa. 25:14; Eph. 1:9; 10; Isa. 45:11.

2. Do the Scriptures show that the world should be converted now? Up to the present, has God tried to convert the world?

Answer.—(a) Acts 15:13-18; Rom. 11:25; Acts 17:31; Isa. 29:18; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; (b) Isa. 55:11; Isa. 46:11; compare Isa. 45:23.

3. Should we expect to understand the Bible better than our forefathers?

Answer.—Dan. 12:8, 10; Prov. 4:18; 1 Cor. 10:11; Hab. 2:2, 3; (Col. 1:25, 26).

4. Why is it that our religious leaders have not been able to answer our questions on the Scriptures?

Answer.—Mark 7:7; Isa. 29: 10-12; Matt. 11:25; Amos 8:11; Luke 11:52.

5. What passages are there where the words (i) "heavens", (ii) "earth," (iii) "fire" are used symbolically to denote (i) spiritual controlling powers, (ii) social arrangements, (iii) destruction?

Answer.—(i) 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 13; Rev. 21:1; Isa. 65:17; Isa. 66:22; Psa. 68:8; Hag. 2:6; (ii) Psa. 46:1-3; Isa. 1:2; Jer. 22:29; (iii) Zeph. 3:8, 9; Psa. 97:3; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 20:14.

6. What Scriptures can we quote to indicate the restored condition of the earth

Answer.—Isa. 35:1, 2, 6-10; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:34-36; Psa. 72:1-20; Matt. 6:10.

7. Why should the earth be restored if heaven be the future home of the race?

Answer.—Only the members of the Church are promised the heavenly home; the world in general will inherit the earth. Psa. 115:16; Amos. 9:11-15.

8. What is the penalty for sin?

Answer.—Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 5:12, 21; Gen. 3:19

9. How can death be the wages of sin if the soul is immortal?

Answer.—Ezek. 18:4; Psa. 116:8; Psa. 89:48; Matt. 10:28; Rom. 2:6, 7; 1 Tim. 6:16.

10. Does death mean unconsciousness?

Answer.—Psa. 9:6; Psa. 146:4; Eccl. 9:5, 10.

11. What is the meaning of the word "ransom?"

Answer.—To deliver by purchase with a corresponding price. Rom. 5:8-19; Heb. 2:7-9.

12. What was required to pay the price of sin?

Answer.—1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 1 Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:6; 1 Pet. 3:18; John 6:51.

13. If there is no responsibility of life and death, does it matter how a man lives? What about the heathen?

Answer.—Matt. 12:36; Eccl. 12:14; Gal. 6:7.

14. When will come the time for the blessing and responsibility of the world in general?

Answer.—Jer. 31:31-34; Acts 15:16, 17; John 5:28, 29 (R.V.); Psa. 98:5-9.

SCRIPTURAL DISPENSATIONS AND AGES.

WORLD THAT WAS	PRESENT EVIL WORLD		WORLD TO COME	
	PATRIARCHAL AGE	JEWISH AGE	MESSIANIC AGE	AGES TO COME

STUDY II.

SORROW AND TROUBLE—WHY PERMITTED ?

Harmonious Co-operation of the Creator's Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power.

A recent writer has truly said: "The summary want of the age is that last philosophy into which shall have been sifted all other philosophy, which shall be at once catholic and eclectic, which shall be the joint growth and fruit of reason and faith, and which shall shed forth through every walk of research the blended light of discovery and revelation."

Many who admit that such a philosophy can emanate from God only, and that the Bible should reveal it, nevertheless fail to find it there, because they do not seek it in an orderly or philosophical manner.

The careful and reverent student of the sacred Scriptures will find, in the light now due to the household of faith, that the Word of God presents a complete and systematic plan for the salvation and development of the human race, which for ages has been in operation, which, up to the present time, has been a success in its gradual development, and which in due time will be gloriously completed. The past six thousand years of human history have been necessary to work out that plan to its present degree of development, and one thousand years more will witness its full consummation in the restitution of every willing member of the race to the original likeness of God, and their establishment in righteousness, with the eternal ages of glory and blessing before them.

Such is the scope of God's plan which He formed before the foundation of the world, to be wrought out in Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last of Jehovah's direct creation—His only begotten Son. (Rev. 1:8, 11; John 1:14, 18; Col. 1:15.) "By him were all things made, and without him was not anything made that was made." "He is the image

of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consists." (John 1:3; Col. 1:15, 17.) In Him also "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."—Col. 1.14.

God, having thus honoured His Son by making Him His instrument or agent for the accomplishment of all His grand designs, declared to men: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He "hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour," and "would have all men honour the Son (as the Father's agent and representative) even as they honour the Father." (Matt. 17:5; Acts 5:31; John 5.23.) Nor does the Son claim higher honour than to be the Father's agent and messenger, "the messenger of the (Jehovah's) covenant" (Mal. 3:1); for He says, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me," and "My Father is greater than I." (John 6:38; 5:30; 4:34; 14:28.) To us, as to the apostle, "there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things; and we by him."—1 Cor. 8:6.

After the creation of angels came the creation of man, a being adapted to live on the earth and to be its lord and king. Man, as well as the angels, was created in the divine image—that is, with faculties of reason, conscience, etc., capable of discerning right and wrong. Man, as king of earth and perfect, as created, was only "a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7, 9), and that little consisted in his being limited by his nature to the earth, while the angelic nature, being spiritual, has a wider range for observation and hence a broader plane for

reasoning. To be an image of God implies freedom of choice or will with respect to one's own conduct. With such freedom man was originally endowed by his Creator, and the alternatives of good and evil were placed before him as a necessity to his trial for lasting life, though not without warning on God's part as to the blessed results of righteousness and the baneful results of evil. On account of man's inexperience, implicit obedience to God's will was required of him for his safety and protection, as well as for a test of his loyalty to his rightful Lord and Sovereign. Nevertheless, God, by divine intuition, foresaw the course that Adam would take and the fall of the whole race with him into death, and also the lessons which that experience with sin and death might be overruled to teach them when, in due time, through the merit of Christ's sacrifice, He would grant them remission of sins upon their repentance and turn to righteousness. He therefore determined to let man take his chosen course, and to inflict on him its just penalty, and then in due time to deliver him from it with a great salvation.

God foresaw that, even with good intentions, man's limited knowledge and experience would continually offer temptations to doubt the wisdom of divine arrangements, if not to disobey them; He therefore embraced this opportunity to convey to all of His creatures, as well as to man, a fuller conception of Himself, in order that they might the more fully and heartily worship and obey Him. As a revelation and illustration of His attributes—Justice, Wisdom, Power and Love—God placed His human son in His own image—perfect though inexperienced, and but slightly informed respecting his Creator's attributes—on trial, in order that he might gain a valuable experience, yet foreknowing that, although in every respect fairly tried, he would, in the use of his own free will, fall into sin.

But God did not purpose to abandon His disobedient and death-deserving creature to eternal ruin, but provided a way of redemption whereby He might be just and yet the justifier of the truly penitent and believing (Rom. 3:26), so that the painful experience gained under the reign of sin and death might eventually, under this overruling influence of divine providence, serve the more firmly to establish them in righteousness and willing loyalty to God.

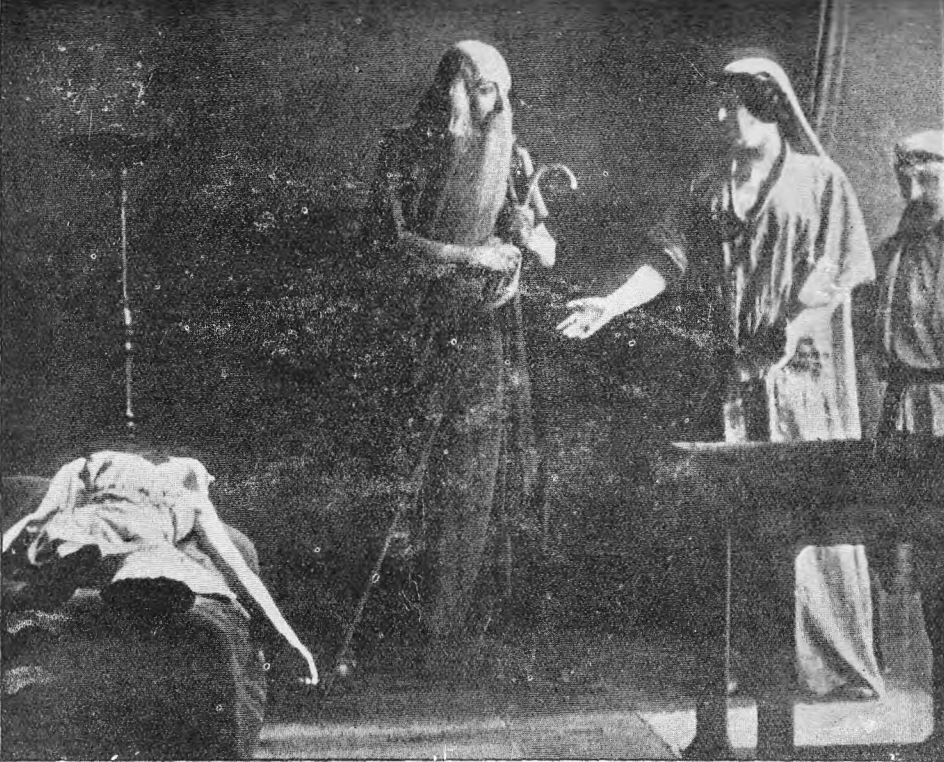
The trial in Eden was merely a test of obedience, or loyalty to God. The fruit of the forbidden tree was good (for all the trees of the garden were good) and was desirable to make one wise; and had they proved their loyalty to God by obedience, probably the restriction would in due time have been removed. Knowledge is a blessing only to those who are subject to the divine will. This, God had arranged that man should acquire by experience, and angels by example. The penalty of man's disobedience was death—"In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die." The penalty was fulfilled to the letter; the dying began as soon as the penalty was pronounced, when they were cast out of Eden and restrained from eating its life-sustaining fruits; and it was completed within the thousand-year day, as predicted. (2 Pet. 3:8.) The penalty, death, being gradually and not suddenly inflicted left the condemned pair free to propagate their species, yet subject to the weakness and all the penalty under which they themselves groaned.

Thus, by one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death by (as a result of) sin; and thus death passed upon all men because all are sinners and imperfect by heredity.—Rom. 5:12.

Sin, and death its penalty, by thus gaining control of Adam, controlled the world, and reigned from Adam to Moses—with but few divine promises,

even, to illuminate the dark way. Then "the law came by Moses," offering lasting life to any one who would observe it in every particular. But in their fallen condition none of the condemned race was able to obey it, and by it to gain the reward of life. As God had designed, however, the law did serve a purpose: it served to show the helplessness of man for his own justification; and it served to point out, as from another than the corrupt and condemned seed of Adam, the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb of God, whose sacrifice, as Adam's substitute or Redeemer, satisfied the claims of justice, bought the world from the slavery of sin and death, and made possible the gospel offer of forgiveness and lasting life, not through our righteousness in keeping God's law (which is impossible by reason of the weakness of the flesh), but by our acceptance of Christ as our Master, and of His ransom sacrifice as the satisfaction for our sins before God.

It might be supposed that the work of blessing the world should have begun at once when the sacrifice for sin was accepted by the Father, as signified by the giving of the spirit of adoption at Pentecost; but not so. Another feature of the divine plan had first to be accomplished, viz.: the selection and development of the Church to be joint heirs with Christ in His glory and kingdom and work of blessing the world. This was from the beginning a part of the divine plan; and therefore the glorious reign and work of blessing the world could not begin at Christ's resurrection, nor at Pentecost, but had to be delayed until the selection of all its tried and faithful members could be accomplished. Or, to state it otherwise, the Father's appointed time for blessing the world is during the seventh thousand years, and had it not been for His purpose to select the Church, the "bride" or "body" of Christ, to share with Him in the work of blessing the race,



there need not have been two advents of our Lord. One would have been sufficient; for He could have come now, in the end of the sixth thousand years, could have redeemed all and at once begun the great work of blessing and restoring mankind. He came to redeem the world nineteen centuries previous to the appointed time of blessing, so as to leave time, before that day, for the selection of His bride from among the redeemed race.

As the occasion of man's fall became God's opportunity for exhibiting to all His creatures His wonderful character from every standpoint—His justice, His wisdom, His power and His love—so it also became an opportunity for the testing in all points of His only begotten Son, preparatory to His yet higher exaltation (Phil. 2:8-10) to the divine nature, with all which that implies of glory, honour and immortality, and of position next to the Father, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. And the same occasion, as pre-arranged of God, also makes possible the calling, selection and trial of the Gospel Church, now soon to be completed and made joint-inheritors, with our Lord and Saviour, of glory, honour and immortality, and like Him to be exalted far above men and angels, even to the divine nature.—2 Pet. 1:4.

Only the justice of God's character has yet been made manifest to the world, and much of its glory is sadly beclouded by human tradition, which falsely declares the wages of sin to be eternal torment instead of "everlasting destruction." God's love for His creatures, the wisdom of His plan of salvation, and His power to save, are as yet but partially revealed, and even distortedly seen by but few indeed. God's justice has been revealed to all for the past six thousand years in the reign of death, the penalty which He prescribed for sin. God's love began to be revealed nineteen hundred years ago, but not

seeing all of the plan, few rightly appreciate the love. Nevertheless, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9.) The wisdom of the Lord's plan will not be appreciated until the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, revealing those features of His plan which then will bring blessings to all the billions which His justice condemned, and which His love redeemed. But the power of God will not be seen in its fulness until well on in the Messianic day. Although partially revealed in the work of creation, the grandest and fullest exhibition remains to be shown in the resurrection from death of those redeemed ones, who, accepting of the gracious provisions of His love, bow in glad submission to all His just requirements.

It is a mistake made by many to suppose that Jehovah's justice and His love are ever in conflict with each other. Both are perfect—His love never desires or attempts what His justice does not endorse: His justice and His love must both approve every act for which His power is exercised. With men, because of lack of wisdom and power, love and justice often conflict. Man's love often has gracious designs which he has not the wisdom or power to accomplish except by violating justice. We must gauge our views by the infinite and stay close to the revelation He makes of his plans, not seeking to make plans of our own for God. God's plan, when clearly seen, fully vindicates His justice as well as His love. The plan of redemption devised by divine wisdom is the essence of unfathomable love based upon uncompromising justice, and will be fully accomplished by divine power. The first act of God's love was to provide a ransom for Adam, and thus for all his race, since it was by his transgression that all fell into sin and death. Until the

ransom was given nothing was done in the way of saving the world: promises and types of coming salvation were made, but nothing more could be done. God had rendered a just sentence, and the penalty could not be set aside: it had to be met. Before Adam and his family could be released from the death sentence by a resurrection, the life of another man not under the sentence had to be paid as its corresponding price, that God might be just in justifying and accepting back to harmony and life all who believe in Jesus and turn unto God in His name. (Acts 4:12.) And having accepted Christ as the ransom of all such, the apostle assures us that "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9.

Thus we see, from God's own declaration, that since Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, or rather, since He ascended up on high, and there appearing in the presence of God on our behalf presented the price of our redemption and became Lord of all, of both the living and the dead, there is no longer any legal hindrance in the way of the return of all mankind to fellowship with God, and to all the blessings and privileges lost under the penalty of the first transgression. The only difficulties remaining are on man's part. In his fallen condition his mind is sick as well as his body. He inclines to believe falsely and is disinclined to believe in so great a salvation, such "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." Besides, he is weak through the fall and does those things which he often does not at heart approve and leaves undone much that at heart he really desires to do, and there is no help in himself. Some assistance in overcoming sinward tendencies must reach him or else the cancellation of

past sin and the opportunity for reconciliation will be a valueless offer.

This necessity, which we recognise, is fully met in those features of the divine plan which are yet to be fulfilled. He who redeemed all is appointed to be both king and judge of all; for God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained," Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:31.) That is, He will righteously grant the world a new, individual trial for eternal life, having cancelled the sentence of the first trial by the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son.

And the redeemed, tried and glorified Church, the faithful bride of Christ, is to share with her Lord in this great work, as kings and priests and judges. (Rev. 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.) As kings they will rule the world in righteousness, enforcing and establishing order and justice and truth; as priests they will teach the people, and through the merit of the one sacrifice for sins forgive the penitent, and cleanse and help them out of their weaknesses—mental, moral and physical; as judges they will judge of the measure of the guilt of all in respect to their course in the future as well as in their past lives, judging not by the hearing of the ear, nor by the sight of the eye, but by an infallible judgment for which they will be abundantly qualified by their exaltation to the divine nature.

While the promise of God to the Church is a change of nature from human to divine, to be effected at the second advent of her Lord, as the completion of His resurrection—the first resurrection (2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:50-53; Phil. 3:10, 11; Rev. 20:6)—the provision of God's plans for the world at large is quite different, viz.: a "restitution" or restoration to all the grand qualities and powers of the human nature (an earthly likeness of the divine)

now so sadly blurred and defaced by the six thousand years of slavery to sin and death.

Rightly to appreciate human restitution, it must be remembered that every excellent quality exhibited among men is but an imperfect exhibition of what belongs to each perfect man, whether it be logical acuteness, mathematical precision; æsthetic taste, art, wit, eloquence, poetic imagination, music, or any other intellectual grace or moral refinement; and that these, to a higher degree than we have ever seen them exhibited by any fallen men, will, in the process of restitution, become as at first designed by the Creator, the endowments of each obedient member of the human family. With the restitution of perfect mental and moral balance to man, the original king of earth, will come also a blessing through man to all his subjects—the beasts of the field, the fowl of heaven, and the fish of the sea (Psa. 8:6, 8); and the ordering of the earth itself is likewise promised.

The “times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21) are, we believe the Scriptures to teach, just at the door. Soon the last members of the body of Christ will have finished their course, and then, with their glorious Head and all the other members of the body, they will shine forth as the sun for the blessing of the entire redeemed race.

Berean Questions.

1. What do we understand by man being made in God's Image?

Answer.—Gen. 1:26. With reasoning power and moral intelligence. Eccl. 7:29.

2. Would it seem that God lacked mercy in His sentence on Adam?

Answer.—Rom. 11:32; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

3. How can it be said that Adam died the same day that he sinned?

Answer.—2 Pet. 3:8; Psa. 90:4; Gen. 5:5

4. To whom did the Mosaic law offer life as a reward of obedience

Answer.—Rom. 9:4; Lev. 18:2, 5; Deut. 5:1-3; Psa. 147: 19, 20; Deut. 29: 10-13.

5. Could anyone be under the law and at the same time be a member in Christ?

Answer.—Gal. 3:24, 25; Rom. 7:1-6; Rom. 10:4; Rom. 3:20-25.

6. What is the purpose of the Gospel Age?

Answer.—Acts 15:14; Rom. 11:25; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7.

7. Of what nature was Christ in His prehuman existence and what was His reward for accomplishing the redemption of the human race?

Answer.—(a) John 3:8-11; John 17:5; Heb. 2:16; Prov. 8:22, 23; John 6:46, 51, 62; John 8:42; (b) Phil. 2:8, 9; Rev. 3:21; Isa. 53:12; Heb. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:27; Acts 5:31; Eph. 1:20-23.

8. Would there be benefit to man in releasing him from the condemnation while still imperfect under present conditions?

Answer.—No, for being imperfect he could not please God. He needs the help which will be supplied under the Mediatorial Kingdom. Rom. 3:10; Heb. 10:31.

9. What is the reward of the followers of Christ during the Gospel Age?

Answer.—2 Pet. 1:4; Rev. 3:21; Luke 22:29, 30; 2 Tim. 2:10-12; 1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:49; Luke 12:32.

10. What is the reward of the rest of mankind, including the prophets?

Answer.—Micah 4:1-6; Isa. 65:17-25; Psa. 37:9, 11; Isa. 51:11; Psa. 45:16; Matt. 11:11.

STUDY III.

DIVINELY APPOINTED TIMES.

“The World that Was”—“The Present Evil World”—“The World to Come.”

“Hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.”—Acts 17:26.

Intelligent people appear to reason upon every subject under the sun except on religion. Approach a man upon any matter of industry or social progress or political economy or finance and we find him reasonably alert to the general law of Cause and Effect, but when it comes to religion the same man refuses to recognise or follow such laws. To illustrate: If a thousand religious men and women were asked to give some general outline of the Divine Plan under which humanity is being dealt with by the Almighty, nine hundred and ninety-nine of them would look at you in blank astonishment as though it were absurd to suppose that God would conduct His affairs along the lines of order, reason, and common sense—Cause and Effect. On the contrary the Scriptures everywhere hold that our Creator is systematically ordering the affairs of earth and “working all things according to the counsel of his own will.”—Ephesians 1:11.

St. Peter divides the world's history into three great epochs, which our common version Bible designates as “worlds.” The first of these, he says, lasted from the creation of our first parents to the Flood. The Flood was the culmination to the course of sin which, he tells us, there prevailed. And only eight persons, Noah and his family, were

carried over as a nucleus for another great epoch or "world," which St. Peter calls, "The world that now is," and which St. Paul calls, "This present evil world" or epoch, and of which Jesus states, "My kingdom is not of this world (epoch)" while again he informs us that Satan is "the Prince of this world."

Certain things have been in progress—certain great instructions and blessings from the Almighty during this long period of over forty-three hundred years. "This present evil world" or epoch is to have a harvest time and its affairs are to be as thoroughly wound up, completed, as were the affairs of "the world before the flood." Then a new epoch or "world to come" will dawn, the character of which is clearly delineated in the Scriptures as being very contrary in every way to that of "this present evil world." It will be "The world to come, whereof we speak," the new epoch, figuratively said to have "a new heavens and a new earth," in which the Lord will dominate human affairs. His elect Church of the present time associated with Him as His bride, will constitute the "new heavens" or new spiritual domination under which human regeneration will bring the "new earth." Under that new dispensation everything will be in accord with the character of its King, the Prince of Light and Righteousness, just as the conditions of "the present evil world" are in harmony with the characteristics of the "Prince of this world, who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience"—"the Prince of Darkness."

" The World That Was."

The "world" or epoch which ended at the Flood accomplished a great work. It was during that period of sixteen hundred and fifty-six years that God first tested Satan by permitting him to have an

opportunity to show the traitorous attitude of his heart in connection with our first parents. Desiring to establish himself as an emperor over earth, separate and distinct from the Empire of Jehovah, Lucifer became Satan, God's Adversary, and has since continued his opposition to the Divine will. Our first parents, through Satan's lie, were led into disobedience to God, which resulted in the death sentence on Adam and his race. Subsequently for centuries the holy angels were allowed to have intercourse with fallen men, God using the opportunity to test, to prove, the loyalty, the faithfulness of the angelic hosts.

Amongst the liberties granted to all the angels at that time was the power to materialise—to assume human forms. We need not stop to discuss the possibility of this, for we are addressing those who believe the Scriptural record, and to such it will be quite sufficient for us to cite one of the many Scriptural instances; the case of the three men who appeared to Abraham and were subsequently found to be angels—spirit beings. They looked, talked, ate and were clothed like men. Abraham knew not who they were until subsequently they revealed their identity, as we read in the account of Genesis 18. The Apostle Paul adds his testimony to this incident, saying to the Church, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.—Hebrews 13:2.

For long centuries this relationship between the angels and mankind continued. We have no record of any human being receiving an uplift from their ministrations. On the contrary, as God had foreseen, the influence of sin was contagious and ere long some of the angelic hosts became so enamoured of the daughters of men that "they took to

themselves wives of such as they chose," and preferred to leave their own habitation or spirit condition and to remain in a materialised form and to raise earthly families, although their course was contrary to the Divine arrangement and must have been so understood by them. Divine power was not interposed to hinder them. The error of this sedition, the leaving of their own habitation or plane of spirit being, from a small beginning, spread, and God's non-interference justified the supposition that He was either not able to cope with the situation, or unable to enforce His own law. Thus centuries rolled by, while the earthly children of "those angels which kept not their first estate" became "giants and men of renown" at a time when maturity was not reached for at least one hundred years.—Genesis 6.

During all those centuries we may be sure that every one of the holy angels had fullest opportunity to participate in the seductive pleasures of sin. And we may be quite sure during that epoch or age God demonstrated fully, completely, which of the angels were in heart and in deed, in spirit and in truth, loyal to Him and to all the principles of His righteousness. This work having been accomplished, that "world before the flood" was brought to an end, was overwhelmed by a flood of waters, the Lord declaring that the whole earth had become corrupt through this evil. The influence of the angels along licentious lines seemingly tended more and more to degrade humanity, so that we read that God beheld that "every imagination of man's heart was evil, and only evil, and that continually."

"This Present Evil World."

"This present evil world" differs from "the world before the flood" in that it is not under the ministration of the angels—but man, in a general sense,

is left to himself. Since the Flood, the world in general has been going on just as if there were no God, the exceptions, aside from the Jewish nation and the Church of Christ, being the destruction of the Sodomites and the preaching of Jonah to the Ninevites, warning them that they were about to perish. In other words, so far as outward appearance goes, God has allowed the world to take its own course, interfering only when the corruption became so great as to make life injurious rather than a favour.

St. Paul, reviewing the question of human degradation as exhibited in heathendom, etc., explains that the great deterioration in the human family is the result of man's being left to himself as respects the Divine supervision. He says, looking back along the line of Noah's descendants, "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful. . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind"—they giving themselves over to things that were not profitable, defiling themselves, etc.—Rom. 1:21-28.

This condition of things continued from Noah's day until three and one-half years after our Lord's crucifixion, when the special favour of God toward the nation of Israel terminated and the "middle wall of partition was broken down"—Cornelius being the first Gentile admitted to the privileges of the Gospel.

During the long period from Noah to Christ—twenty-five hundred years—God, as we have seen, had no dealing with the world, but He did have very special dealings with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and then subsequently with the nation of Israel. To those patriarchs He gave an oath-bound covenant, that through their posterity He would ultimately bless all the families of the earth.

Moreover the character of the promise was such that it implied not only the resurrection of the patriarchs, but the resurrection also of all the families of the earth that have gone down into death under the great Adamic sentence.—Rom. 5: 12, 17, 19.

The nation of Israel was segregated from all the other nations of the world and bound to the Lord and He to them by the Covenant of the Law entered into at Mt. Sinai. Under the terms of that Covenant it was implied that that whole nation should constitute the seed of Abraham and rule and bless all other nations, but the conditions were the keeping of the Law perfectly. God, of course, knew that, as imperfect men, Israel had undertaken an impossible contract. But He also knew that under His supervision the contract would not eventually be to their disadvantage, but the reverse. He used that nation as a typical people, their jubilees representing the "times of restitution" (Acts 3:20) coming to the world under the Millennial reign of Christ. Their day Sabbath typified a coming blessing to Spiritual Israel. Their year Sabbath typified a coming blessing to the world, to the universe. Their Day of Atonement for sins typified the day of better sacrifices, of Christ and the Church. Indeed, we may understand that fleshly Israel and all of its great affairs were typical fore-shadowings of God's greater blessings to come in after dispensations.

Jewish Favour Culminated.

The culmination of the Lord's dealings with Israel was reached, as He had intended from the beginning, when our Lord Jesus left the glory of the Father on the heavenly plane and was made flesh, being born under the Law Covenant. Not being a direct member of the human family, but

"holy, harmless and separate from sinners," He was perfect and fully able to keep all the terms of that Law Covenant, and did so. Thus under the provisions of the Law Covenant He, and He alone of all the Jewish nation, could claim the rights of the Abrahamic Covenant—the blessings foretold and the rightful authority to bless men, for, as the ruler of earth, He took the place of Father Adam with all his rights and authorities described in Psalm 8:4-6.

By keeping these rights and privileges as a man our Lord indeed would have been an earthy potentate of considerable dignity, the highest amongst men. But the Father's place for Him and for the world was far higher than this. As an earthy potentate He would have ruled over a falling and dying race and would have been privileged merely to counsel, rule and direct their imperfect energies; but He never could have brought them to eternal life. Hence the Divine plan was that He should die as the Redeemer of Adam and his race, that thus He might have the just, the legal right to lift out of sin and degradation and death all of mankind who would fall in line with the gracious arrangements of the Divine purpose which centre in Christ. It was in fulfilment of this feature of the Divine plan that our Lord laid down the earthly kingdom, the earthly rights, all that He had, as man's ransom price. (Matt. 13:44)) "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—1 Tim. 2:6.

"Every Knee Shall Bow."

We now have Messiah exalted and in His possession the authority justly, legally acquired, whereby He may bless all the families of the earth—all the children of Adam, by restoring to the willing and obedient "that which was lost"—earthly

perfection and dominion. Where will He begin His work of blessing? All the prophecies imply that Messiah would begin His work with Israel and that it should progress through Israel to all nations. But before giving the restitution blessing to Israel under the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31: 31, He would first exercise His right of granting life as a result of His ransom sacrifice, for the purpose of gathering a special class of people—"a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood." This, as the Apostle tells us, was kept a "mystery," and, generally speaking, it is still a "mystery," not only to Israel, but to the world. The gathering of the Spiritual Israelites was the first step in the new programme. Those of the Jewish nation at our Lord's First Advent who were of the right attitude of heart were transferred from Moses to Christ, from natural Israel to spiritual Israel. Then, as we have seen, from the time of Cornelius onward, the Gospel message has been free to all who have the believing heart and hearing ear to take it. These, as a whole, as our Lord intimated are but a "little flock." His words were, "Fear not, Little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32.

The Kingdom, the life eternal, etc., which the Lord has to give away, are those of Adam, which were lost through his disobedience and re-purchased by our Lord at Calvary. These He gives to His followers, the 'little flock,' but not to keep. Earthly restitution blessings are theirs to sacrifice only. Whoever will not accept them on these terms cannot be Jesus' disciples. Such are the terms of the heavenly or high calling bestowed upon His followers. They must take up their cross and follow Him in the sacrifice of earthly life and earthly restitution rights, if they would share with Him

the glory and honour that will be His in His exalted station.

"The world to come" merely signifies the epoch to come, the epoch wherein dwelleth righteousness, where righteousness will be in the ascendant, and where sin will be absolutely under the control of the great Redeemer, who then will be the King of glory, ruling, reigning, enlightening, blessing, uplifting, restituting, purging, purifying, and bringing to perfection so many of Adam's race as will heartily respond to the rules of His kingdom. All others will be destroyed as brute beasts.—2 Pet. 2:12.

Berean Questions.

1. Is there a Scriptural foundation for believing that God has a predetermined plan and specification in respect to His dealings with mankind

Answer.—Eph. 1:8-10; Acts 15:18; Eph. 3:11 (Diaglott); Isa. 46:10; Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:18:20; 1 Tim. 2:6; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 5:6; Hab. 2:2, 3; Acts 17:26, 27, 31.

2. Will the winding up of the affairs of this age involve the destruction of all living?

Answer.—Psa. 102:19, 20; Matt. 24:21, 22; Isa. 2:3, 4; Zeph. 2:3; Rom. 11:25, 26; Jer. 31:31-34; Rev. 11:15.

3. What caused Satan to become disloyal to God?

Answer.—Isa. 14:13, 14; compare Matt. 23:12; 1 Tim. 3:6; Ezek. 28: 17-19.

4. How do we know that angels are learning by observation at the same time as man is having his experience with sin?

Answer.—1 Pet. 3:18, 19; 1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:12, 13.

5. What does 2 Peter 2:4 mean?

Answer.—The word translated "hell" signifies a condition of restraint by which their operations are curtailed. Jude 6.

6. Is it correct to think that angels have bodies similar to man?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:40; Heb. 1:7, 14; Heb. 2:16.

7. How were angels able to appear to mankind?

Answer.—Gen. 18:1-3; Gen. 19:1-15; Judges 6:11-14; Judges 13:2-21. By assuming human form.

8. Why was it necessary for the world to be destroyed by water

Answer.—Gen. 6:1-6, 9, 11-13; 2 Pet. 2:4, 5. These verses show that Noah and his family only were perfect; therefore God destroyed the world in order that the progeny of the angels and the daughters of men should be swept away.

9. How do we know that God has not been dealing with mankind generally since the Flood?

Answer.—Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:21-28; John 17:9; John 14:30; Luke 4:6; Amos 3:2.

10. What are the exceptions to the above, and what are the reasons?

Answer.—Gen. 19:24; Jude 7; Ezek. 16:49, 50; Ex. 9:15, 16; Rom. 9:17.

- 11.—Why is this Dispensation called "the present EVIL world?"

Answer.—John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Luke 4:6, 7; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 20:3; 1 John 5:19.

12. Were there no Christians before Pentecost? What about Abraham, Moses and David, and the Old Testament worthies?

Answer.—A Christian is one who follows Christ, walking in His footsteps. Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11; Heb. 11:39, 40; Matt. 11:11.

13. What were the promised rewards for faithfulness to Israel, the prophets and patriarchs?

Answer.—Deut. 28: 1-14; Psal. 45:16.

14. Why was God so particular that Moses should do everything exactly according to His directions (Ex. 25:9, 40.)

Answer.—1 Cor. 10:11; Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 8:5.

INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT.

"Out of disaster and ruin complete,
 Out of the struggle and dreary defeat,
 Out of my sorrow and burden and shame,
 Out of the evils too fearful to name,
 Out of my guilt and the criminal's doom,
 Out of the dreading and terror and gloom."

"Into the sense of forgiveness and rest,
 Into inheritance with all the blest,
 Into a righteous and permanent peace,
 Into the grandest and fullest release,
 Into the comfort without an alloy,
 Into a perfect and permanent joy."

STUDY IV.

EARTH'S GREAT CONFLAGRATION.

Fire Used as a Symbol in the Bible as in the Language and Literature of Our Day—Symbolic Earth, Symbolic Heavens and Symbolic Seas to be Symbolically Burned—The New Heavens and the New Earth.

"All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."—Zephaniah 3:8, 9.

The symbolic language of the Bible is now in common use.

The time was when our forefathers read the Bible without realising that it contained figures of speech and symbolisms such as we use in our ordinary conversation. Hence the mistake that was so generally made of supposing the Bible to teach that our earth is to be literally consumed with literal fire. Not merely Adventists have so believed and taught, but all the creeds of all the denominations contain the same teachings—that at the Second Coming of Christ the world is to be burned up. This erroneous thought has helped to blind God's people to the general teachings of the Bible that at the Second Coming of Jesus the world will enter upon its grandest epoch—styled by St. Peter, "Times of Restitution"—literally, years of restitution.—Acts 3:19-21.

Practically all the creeds of Christendom teach this doctrine, that the world is to be burned up. The Bible, all the while, has been telling us plainly "The earth abideth forever," and again, "God formed not the earth in vain; He formed it to be inhabited." (Ecc1. 1:4; Isa. 45:18.) Our earth has never yet been fully inhabited, and is not even fit for habitation, as a whole. Millions of acres are, as yet, untouched; and other millions are desert wilds. The Bible tells us that "the wilderness shall blossom as a rose," "solitary places shall be glad," and "streams shall come forth from the desert,"—in Messiah's Day.—Isa. 35:1-10; 11:1-9, etc.

Messiah's Day is the great Sabbath Day, a thousand years long, which is to follow the Six Great Days of man's work week.

These Six Days—six thousand years—have now nearly ended. This accounts to us for the wonderful inventions, developments, and increase of knowledge, wealth and blessings of every kind which have come to the world during the last few years. And our scientific men in full accord with the Bible, though unaware of it, are telling us that we are just on the eve of the most wonderful scientific discoveries that will still further enrich and bless the world. The Bible explains that all this increase of knowledge was foreknown of the Lord and purposed, and that He is taking away the veil of ignorance and superstition which so long has hindered us.

The same Bible which foretold the great war in Europe, and symbolically pictured the letting loose of the four winds of heaven to the injury of the earth, points us to the next stage of this great trouble, symbolically styling it an earthquake, and declaring that it will be "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great."—Rev. 16:18.

This earthquake of revolution is what we might naturally have expected, even without the Divine message on the subject.

But the great climax of the trouble the Bible represents as a symbolic fire following the great symbolic earthquake of revolution. Fire in Bible language symbolically represents destruction—in this case, the destruction of the symbolic earth, political, financial, social, and the religious heavens. This is the picture which St. Peter gives us, saying, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up; . . . the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—2 Pet. 3:10, 12, 13.

The new heavens and earth represent the new order of things of Messiah's Kingdom. The new heavens will consist of Jesus and His Bride class, which He has been selecting from the world during the past nearly nineteen centuries—a Royal Priesthood. The new earth will be the new social order of things under the control and direction of the new heavens. The great King declares, "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:1-5.) There will be no patching of present institutions, but a clean sweep of them by the fire of God's anger, which will precede the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth wherein only that which is righteous, equitable, just, true, will be recognised.

Equally symbolic is the statement that then "there will be no more sea." In the symbolic language of the Bible "sea" represents the restless masses of mankind, while the "earth" represents the social order, or structure, and the "mountains" represent

the kingdoms or governments. When the new order of things shall have come into power, Socialists, Anarchists, and others, discontented with the present order of things—symbolically represented by the sea—will be no more; for the new order of things will fully and more than meet their desires and expectations. "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."—Hag. 2:7.

In the symbolic language of the Bible, all the mountains will be brought low, and the valleys will be exalted. These statements do not refer to the literal earth, to the literal mountains and literal valleys any more than to the literal sea, but signify the great revolutionary processes by which the new order of things will be inaugurated. The high ones will be brought down, the humble ones will be lifted up, and general human equality will be established—along the lines of righteousness, however. Some of the rich and favoured of the present time may at first feel greatly discontented; but so surely as they are just men, or are amenable to the instructions along the line of justice, they will eventually come to see, appreciate, and rejoice in the new Divine order of things, which will be for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

St. Paul prophetically pointed down to our day, and styled it "that evil day." He urged God's people, saying, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." (Eph. 6:13.) We are already in this evil day; and already thousands of Christians have fallen away from faith in the Lord. They did not have on the whole armour of God. They were unprepared. The day of the Lord came upon them as a thief (1 Thess: 5:2), and as a snare.—Luke 21:35.

Notice how fully and distinctly the apostle has pictured our present distress. He says, pointing exactly to our time, "The fire [of that day] shall try

every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Corinthians 3:13.) He is not referring to the world, but to the people of God. He proceeds to explain that God's people build upon the Rock Christ Jesus, but that each should be careful to build his faith structure of the proper material—the gold, silver, and precious stones of the Divine promises. He tells, however, that some do build otherwise—with wood, hay, and stubble of human traditions and philosophies and speculations.

The apostle declares that the fire of this day shall try, or test, all these faith structures; and that those built of human philosophies and the creeds of the Dark Ages will be consumed as wood, hay and stubble would go down before a fire. But those who have built their faith upon the promises of God's Word will not suffer loss in this fiery ordeal. The apostle further intimates that those who suffer the loss by fire may, if they still abide upon the Rock Christ Jesus, themselves be saved so as by fire; for to such the fire will really prove a profitable experience in that it will sweep away the errors and leave them opportunity for building up a holy faith on the Divine promises.

The trouble with the majority is that, while trusting in Jesus, they have had a false faith, a faith built of human traditions and not of God's promises. The reason they do not know what they believe is that their faith structure has been burnt down.

When we see the glorious blessings that are just at hand, the fact that they shall be entered upon through the doorway of trouble, seems the less important. Our Socialist friends urge us to join with them, saying, "We are tired of preaching about what God will do by and bye; come and join us; be Socialists and do something now." We reply that, we appreciate the fact that many Socialists

are intelligent and that many of them are sincere; but in our opinion their wisdom is the wisdom of this world, which, from God's viewpoint, is foolishness. They are not able to bring about the great changes which they desire, and if they could bring them about, they would be unable to maintain those changes so long as sin and death reign in this world. What the world needs is what God has provided, a Saviour and a Great One, able to save to the uttermost—completely.

We tell our Socialist friends that we know they will succeed beyond their expectations. Like Samson of old they will pull down the house not only upon others, but also upon themselves—"There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation," as our Lord Jesus foretold.—Matt. 24:21.

We should follow the course directed by God's Word, and urge God's people everywhere to do the same—to wait upon the Lord to bring about the great change of dispensations which He has purposed and promised. Hear the words of the Prophet: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." The fire of God's jealousy, or anger, is not literal fire. It will be the fire of anarchy, by which He will permit humanity to destroy its grandest achievements of civilisation.

That the fire of God's jealousy is not literal fire is demonstrated by the next verse, which declares that, after this fire shall have done its work, then the Lord will turn unto the people a pure message that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent. If the whole earth

were devoured with a literal fire, there would be no people left to receive God's pure message and turn to Him. But after the fire of anarchy and of trouble shall have spent itself, and after the New Dispensation shall have been inaugurated, the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" will fill the whole earth. Eventually every knee will bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father.—Habakkuk 2:14; Phillippians 2:10, 11.

Berean Questions.

1. In what way will the social and ecclesiastical systems be destroyed?

Answer.—Psa. 46; Joel 3:16; Dan. 2:34, 44, 45; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10; Hag. 2:6, 7; Rev. 2:27.

2. Have the wonderful inventions of our time been foretold?

Answer.—Dan. 12:4; Nahum 2:4; Job 38:35.

3. How do we know that Christ and the Church will be the new heavens of the world to come?

Answer.—Rev. 2:26; Rev. 21:1, 2; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30; Rom. 8:17; Isa. 65:17-19; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 3:21; 1 Cor. 6:2; Gal. 3:29.

4. What will be the earthly centre of Christ's Kingdom?

Answer.—Isa. 2:1-3; Zech. 8:20-23; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:16, 17; Psa. 45:16; Micah 4:1, 2; Amos 1:2.

5. What will happen to the raging sea when Christ takes control?

Answer.—Psa. 107:29; Psa. 46:9, 10; Rev. 21:1; Psa. 114:3; Isa. 2:4; Psa. 30:5 (symbolised Matt. 8:26); Psa. 89:9.

6. What is the only foundation for faith, and what should be built thereon?

Answer.—Isa. 28:16; 1 Cor. 3:11, 12; Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 1:17; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Pet. 3:18.

7. Has the Church any part in the destruction of the present institutions?

Answer.—Isa. 63:3-5; Isa. 26:20, 21; Joel 2:1-11; Zeph. 2:3; Isa. 10:5-7; Isa. 30:30, 31.

8. Will all be destroyed in the time of trouble, or will some live on?

Answer.—Zeph. 3:8, 9; Zech. 14:16; Rev. 11:15; Psa. 102:19-21; Matt. 24:22; Rev. 1:18.

STUDY V.

THE GREAT DAY OF GOD.

We Should Walk Worthy of Our Great Vocation.

"Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:11, 12.) The marginal reading omits the word "unto" after the word "hasting." The word "unto" was supplied by the translators in an endeavour to make the rendering clear. The marginal rendering does not give the right thought, evidently; for we could not hasten the day of the Lord. God's plan was fixed before the foundation of the world. In this passage the phrase, "hastening the preparation for the day of God," more nearly gives the Apostle's thought than either of the other translations.

We can hasten our preparation for the wonderful things coming, but we cannot hasten the day. Indeed, the fact that the marvellous things God has foretold are now beginning to come to pass demonstrates that the day of the Lord is now present. It is very necessary to realise what manner of persons we should be and then be such persons. We should be saints, faithful to the Lord in all things. We should give as much of our time as possible to the perfecting of ourselves and to the building up of one another in the most holy faith. We should be ensamples "in all holy conversation and godliness."

This word "conversation" in the old English includes the sum-total of holy living—our words, our deeds, our general conduct. It has thus in the Scriptures a wider meaning than is given it to-day. St. Peter knew that God's people would be helped by the thought that the great day of the Lord was at hand, so he says, in view of this, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" Then how paltry all the things of "this present evil world" should appear to us who see the disintegration of the present order already under way!

What were the things to be dissolved? The apostle had just been specifying them—"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the things that are therein, shall be burned up." Yet God's people, as the apostle says, "look for a new heavens and a new earth." He is not speaking of literal heavens, but the symbolic heavens—the ecclesiastical heavens, the present church organisations. The prophet Zephaniah also speaks of this same great burning time of the day of the Lord.—Zephaniah 1:14-18; 3:8, 9.

Even now the present heavens, the nominal church systems, are in great commotion, in much distress. Preachers and people are wondering what these things mean that are now taking place. They have been telling everybody that the world is getting better, that all will soon be converted through the churches. They have been saying, "Peace! peace!" but instead of peaceful conditions have come riot and war. (Jeremiah 6:14-19.) There has been no real basis for peace. Christians who are hearkening to God's Word are the only ones who have a real basis for peace. In the Lord's Word and in the Lord's Spirit we have the things

that make for peace. 'Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.' "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

With the world the disposition is, "See that nobody gets the better of you. Fight your own battles." Life is a battle for all mankind. Some fight for a living, and others in more open warfare. All are more or less contentious to have the best they can get. But the true Christian's fight is in his own body principally—against selfishness, a desire to have his own way, to gratify his own natural inclinations. God is not selecting a class different from people in general in this respect. On the contrary, not many great, learned, noble, wise, has God chosen, but chiefly "the poor of this world, rich in faith." This fact leaves us no room for pride.

We find that we have something to contend with in this natural meanness of our fallen nature, while the world imagine that they have something to be proud of. "No one shall get ahead of me if I can help it!" is their sentiment. The Lord gives His children different instruction, but not instruction merely; for if that were all, it would be very much harder for us than it is. He gives us a noble incentive and the necessary assistance all along the way. God has set before us a great prize; some of us have seen its glory and are running for it. What is this prize? Oh, glory, honour, immortality, joint-heirship with Christ in the heavenly kingdom, riches such as no earthly being ever dreamed of! He not only has shown us these things, but has given us the opportunity of obtaining them.

Heavenly Riches Incomparable.

We see many people who hope some day to be very rich. Now, the Lord offers every one of us

who has the hearing ear something beside which a million pounds or many millions would be as nothing, absolutely insignificant. To those who become His children He offers riches of grace, of life, of glory and exaltation far above angels, cherubim or seraphim, and still farther above humanity; and these riches are to be eternal. Of this we are sure; we have the Lord's Word for it in many places. The Lord through the Apostle Peter said, you remember, that by the exceeding great and precious promises He had given us we might be made partakers of the Divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4). Why did He make this wonderful offer? Because of His love for us and because He as an infinite purpose to be outworked. We are to be transformed, made New Creatures, meet to be partakers of our glorious inheritance.

As St. Paul says, "All things are yours." The whole world would be insignificant in comparison with the Lord's rich promises to those who follow Jesus in the narrow way. Some live and toil for forty and fifty years to accumulate a fortune, and they generally die before they get much besides worry and care out of it; and at best it is all very disappointing. But God has promised to give His children everlasting life on the very highest plane, and glory, honour and joy beyond compare. How rich we feel who have accepted God's great offer and are complying with His terms! Let others contend about these other things if they will. Why should we waste any time quarrelling over earthly baubles?

Our future is all dependent upon our becoming copies of God's dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We would surely lose the prize if we were to set our affections on earthly things. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

Are your affections going to home and business, or other earthly attractions, or to the things above? Do you think chiefly of these earthly things, and then when in prayer try to turn your affections above again? We shall not thus succeed in making our calling and election sure.

When the Master invited the apostles Peter, James and John up into the mountain with Him, where He was transfigured, they did not wish ever to go down again. Peter asked permission to build tabernacles there. So when some brethren get to a very uplifting meeting or convention of believers they desire to stay. They think they could be certain of spiritual victory in such surroundings. But we cannot always remain upon the mountain-top. We must return to the valley below for our testing, our proving and our crystallisation of character and for service for God.

The apostle in our text calls attention to the fact that we not only have the heavenly things, far better and grander than the earthly things, but also that the present order is to be dissolved, as we have seen. Let us not become entangled with the things of this world. One might gain a high office, he might get a large fortune, have many servants, a fine mansion, automobiles, etc. But when he saw all these things slipping from his grasp, taking wings, how foolish his course in clutching for these transitory baubles would appear. How he would long for something permanent and substantial.

This will be the case with many. All these earthly things are bound to disappear in the great cataclysm just ahead. In this time of the Lord's second presence His saints are to be glorified with Him. We look from the Divine standpoint at the dissolving and shaking of all the things of this present Dispensation. The only thing that will not be shaken down is the kingdom of God. Let us

then serve the Lord faithfully, and realise the value of the unshakable things which will thus be ours. —Heb. 12:26-28.

Everything unjust, untrue, false, in any sense, everything imperfect will be shaken down. They will all be burned up. The things of the present time—ecclesiastical, social, financial, political—will all become “as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the wind shall carry them away” forever. (Dan. 2:35, 44.) Then the new order shall come in. The true Church of God will be the “new heavens”—God’s saints. Then there will be a “new earth”—a new social order. This will gradually bring in perfection. Mankind will be delivered from sin and death. All may become complete through the work of Christ.

Christ Jesus will always be the Head of the Church, although after their glorious “change” they will not need the robe of His righteousness, imputed justification. This “change” of the Church is, we believe, very near at hand. Knowing all that is so soon to come to pass, is it any wonder that the apostle urges us to watchfulness and saintliness? Our salvation, our full deliverance, is ready to be revealed now in this last day, which is right upon us. For about 1900 years the Church of Christ has patiently waited and prayed for these things to take place.

Necessary Character-Traits in Saints.

It is very important that we heed the apostle’s words in our text, “Seeing, then, that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” We hope to be copies of God’s dear Son. He had the Father’s spirit in all things. He made the Father’s will His own. So we are to have the Father’s spirit and to make His will our own. We

are to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, the mind of the apostles and all the true saints.

The Scriptures tell us how the Lord's Spirit manifests itself. It is manifested in meekness in our intercourse with the brethren, in a humble appreciation of ourselves, in contentment with everything our God gives, in a delight to have Christ as our Teacher. It is manifested in gentleness. There are some people who are gentle because, naturally, they do not know how to be anything else, because they have not sufficient character to be anything else. These people will gain character during the millennium; but God now desires those only who have a strong individuality and a love of righteousness. Others are not appealed to by the Lord's message.

The class that appreciate the Lord's Word are those who have real character, something of a will of their own by nature. You could not give up your will to God if you had none. The condition upon which we may become disciples of Christ is to surrender our wills. From that time on we must keep them surrendered. There is no harm in a person's having a strong will. He will make one of the best soldiers in the Lord's army if that will is turned in the right direction. This class that God is calling have a good, strong will. But this will must be trained to full obedience to the Lord. It must die to self. We are learning this daily in the school of Christ.

If you are inclined to practise patience for a while and then get tired, remember "you have need of patience, that having done the will of God you might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36.) The Lord has been patient with you. The prize-winners must become like our Father and like His Son. We must learn patience, if it is not there naturally. You may feel inclined to say, "The Lord must

accept me just as I am." But the Lord will not take you into the kingdom just as you are. He accepted you at first as you were; but He expected you to overcome, to develop as a new creature. If you wish to be in the kingdom class, you must attain the character-likeness of Christ.

But someone may ask, "Why does not the Lord make us perfect by His own power, without such painful effort on our part?" We answer, The character you develop is stronger for your struggles, and it is your own. It is a necessary part of our schooling to develop character. Why do we send children to school? It is because by the lessons there learned they will be exercising their mental faculties, thus making their minds stronger for every subject, fitting them for the responsibilities awaiting them later. So it is with us.

Meekness, patience, long-suffering—these are some of our lessons. To be long-suffering means to bear long and be kind, to have the quality of endurance toward others, to be very kind in your home toward husband or toward wife, toward the children, toward your brothers and sisters. This is sometimes hard. But remember. "There is none righteous [perfect], no, not one," If you have not found that you have many imperfections, you have not learned the first lesson in the school of Christ.

We each have heads of different shape, and brains whose quality varies. But when we give ourselves to the Lord we all need a course of vigorous training; for we are very defective. We must have experiences that will reveal to us our own individual weaknesses and faults, that by Divine help they may be corrected as far as possible. The Lord desires every one of us to know how much and where we lack, what we need in order to build ourselves up into Christ. We should each know what part of our own character needs the most attention. In

order thus to build ourselves up we look to that perfect Law which shows us just what a perfect character is—gentle, meek, loving, forgiving, patient, etc.

Walking Worthy of Our Calling.

If you are prayerfully striving to do the best you can, God is pleased, He sees this in you, and will love you very much. He will approve you. But the Lord will not say, "Well done," unless you have done well. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" Do not compare yourselves with the world, not even their noblest ones. They are not begotten of God's Holy Spirit; they are sinners. We are called to the highest of positions. We have been begotten of the Spirit for a special place of great exaltation in God's family. We are to look for every indication of God's stately steppings in this great day of the Lord. Jesus only are we to see, that our characters may become conformed to His.

Our deliverance is at hand. "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads; for your deliverance draweth nigh." Hasten to prepare yourselves for this day of the Lord. When all the things of the old order are dissolved the new order will be ushered in. When the saints are gathered beyond the veil, will you be among them? Thank God, we have the most wonderful hope in the world! We have come nearly to the close of our earthly pilgrimage. Let us then be true to God, waiting in patience and faith for our glorious "change."

Berean Questions.

1. What are the apostolic exhortations to the saints living at the end of the age?

Answer.—Heb. 10:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:7, 8; James 5:7, 8; Eph. 5:15, 16; Eph. 6:13; 1 Thess. 5:4-8; Luke 21:28, 36

2. What will be the only sure basis of lasting peace?

Answer.—Isa. 32:17; Isa. 28:17; Psa. 119:165; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:23-28.

3. Are we right in supposing that the Lord is choosing the best of people to be heirs of the Kingdom?

Answer.—James 2:5; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 21:16; John 7:48; Acts 4:13.

4. What is the hope of the saints?

Answer.—Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4; Psa. 17:15; 1 John 3:1, 2; Rev. 3:21; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 2:9; John 17:24; 2 Tim. 2:12; John 14:3; 1 Pet. 5:4.

5. What is necessary in order to obtain the prize?

Answer.—Rom. 8:29, 30; Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil. 3:13, 14; Matt. 5:44, 45; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 1 Pet. 2:19-21; Rev. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:11-12; 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

6. How do the Scriptures compare earthly riches with heavenly hopes

Answer.—Matt. 6:19, 20; Phil. 3:7, 8; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; John 4:10-14; Matt. 19:27-29.

7. What must be surrendered before we can become true Christians?

Answer.—Rom. 12:1; John 12:24-26; Matt. 16:24, 25; Matt. 10:37-39; Rom. 6:3; Phil. 1:29; Col. 3:3.

8. Is the Christian on exercising faith at once perfected.

Answer.—Grow in grace. 2 Pet. 3:18. Add to faith. 2 Pet. 1:5; Rom. 5:2-5; 1 Pet. 5:10.

STUDY VI.

MESSIAH'S THOUSAND YEAR DAY.

"The Saints Shall Judge the World."

"God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world."—Acts 17:31.

It is not to-day fashionable in civilised communities to worship images; and yet in another sense it is. There is still a great worship of man throughout the civilised world, but in a different form from that of old. No longer do we bow before wooden images, but before inward images—the images of our minds, our mental aspirations—with some, wealth and fame; with others, ease and pleasure, and with still others, the creed idols of our forefathers, miserable misrepresentations of the true God.

The Day of Judgment.

St. Paul on Mars Hill preached Jesus and the resurrection—Jesus as the Redeemer from the death sentence, making possible the resurrection of the dead by satisfying the demands of Divine law against the sinner—the resurrection as the means or agency through which the blessing of the Saviour's death will reach Adam and all the families of the earth. As we follow St. Paul's thought we will surely be blessed by his view of the Gospel.

Addressing the Gentiles, the apostle explains that for a long time God had "winked" at Polytheism and image worship, "but now," he says, "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Let us note the meaning of these words. How did God "wink" at sin and idolatry? And does He still

"wink" at it? And why did He change and when did He begin to command all men to repent?

The answer is that for four thousand years idolatry prevailed and God "winked" at or took no notice of it. He did not "wink" at the idolaters' dying in their ignorance and say to the devils, "Take these poor creatures who know no better! Roast them to all eternity!" Nothing of the kind. Our forefathers merely imagined that and by false reasoning convinced themselves, and twisted some texts of Scripture which they did not properly understand in support of this theory; and then they handed it down to our perplexity and to the testing of our faith in God.

God "winked" at idolatry and sin for four thousand years in the sense of not noticing it, making no comment on it, sending no reproofs, leaving the heathen in their ignorance. The only exception to this was God's dealings with the little nation of Israel. To the Jews He gave a Law Covenant which offered eternal life on the condition of their thorough obedience to the Divine law, the measure of a perfect man's ability, which they were unable to comply with; and hence they died the same as did the heathen. All went to the Bible hell—to the tomb—to sheol, to hades, the state or condition of death—an unconscious state, a "sleep."

Jesus the Redeemer.

God was in no haste to send the Redeemer; over 4,000 years elapsed before Jesus was born, and thirty years more before He began His ministry. Had it been true, as some aver, that millions, for all those centuries, were blindly stumbling into eternal torture for lack of a Divine revelation, we may be sure that our gracious God would not have left them without it. Who can think of a just and loving God as winking at the going of millions of His

creatures to eternal torture? But since they merely "fell asleep" in death, He could very well "wink" at the matter in view of His future plans, which we will consider shortly.

The fact is that no real offer of release could possibly be made until the Redemption price had been provided for the original sin under which they were condemned to death. This is the apostle's argument, viz., that "now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The now implies that He did not command men previously to repent; and the reason why He did not do so is manifest, for all the repenting they could do and all the righteous living possible to them would not have saved them—they would have died anyway. Hence there could have been no message sent to them, for if the messenger had come and had said, "Repent, and live contrary to your fallen tastes and appetites," the people might properly enough have said, "Why, for what reason should we practise self-denial, self-restraint? Would it bring us any blessing of everlasting life or harmony with God?" The truthful answer would have been, "No, because you are already under a death sentence and alienated from God as sinners."

Hence, God merely overlooked or "winked" at the ignorance and superstition of the period from Adam to Christ. But as soon as Jesus had died, "the just for the unjust," to make reconciliation for iniquity—immediately the message went forth—God offered forgiveness and reconciliation to those who would believe in Jesus and would accept the Divine terms. Such have their sins forgiven. Such may come back to fellowship with God.

God's Appointed Day.

Let us note carefully what the apostle says respecting God's appointed day for the judging of the

world. He says that the command to repent now goes forth to all men everywhere, "because God hath appointed a [future] day, in which He will judge the world." The apostle does not refer to that day as already begun, but as merely appointed or arranged for in advance. He means that in arranging that "Jesus, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," God was arranging that every man might have a judgment or trial, to determine whether or not he will be worthy of this blessing which Jesus' death provides him an opportunity to secure. The day was future in St. Paul's time, and it is still future, because God has other work which He proposes shall be accomplished first, before the world's Day of Judgment or trial shall begin.

The world's trial day or period of judgment, or testing as to worthiness or unworthiness for everlasting life, will be one of the thousand-year days mentioned by Peter, who said, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years." The same period is called elsewhere the "day of Christ," the day or period of Messiah's glorious reign. By the righteous ruling of His kingdom, by the suppression of Satan and sin and the scattering of darkness, ignorance and superstition, by the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in its beams, that glorious day will bring blessing to the world in general—opportunity for each individual to come into judgment or trial, the result of which will be either the reward of life everlasting or the punishment of death everlasting—"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

The apostle's words respecting mankind are still true: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"—"waiting for the manifestation of

the sons of God." (Rom. 8:22, 19.) If the nineteen centuries' delay in the introduction of this great day seems long, let us not forget that it is less than half as long as the period which preceded—the period prior to the coming of Jesus and His dying, "the just for the unjust." Nor is the entire period long from the Divine standpoint. For as the prophet declares, "A thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday," or even shorter, "as a watch in the night." The six great days of a thousand years each, in which sin and death have reigned, are to be followed by a great Sabbath or rest from evil—a thousand years of refreshment, reinvigoration, upbuilding, restitution.—Acts 3: 19-23.

"The Mystery of God."

The purpose of the nineteen centuries between the time when Jesus died as man's Redeemer and the time when He will take His throne as the Restorer of Adam and his race is spoken of as a mystery, because the great work of grace herein accomplished is measurably hidden from the world. The Jews do not understand it; they expected that Messiah's kingdom and their own national exaltation would have come long ago. They cannot tell now why they have been for eighteen centuries outcast from the Divine favour. It is a mystery to them.

The Scriptures tell us who may know or understand this mystery and when it will be finished. They say, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." (Psa. 25:14.) They tell us "that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished." (Rev. 10:7), which He hath kept secret from the foundation of the world. St. Paul refers to this mystery, saying that it was "hidden from past ages and dispensations," and that it "is now revealed to the

saints." He explains what it is, namely, that we should be fellow-heirs and of the same body with our Redeemer.—Eph. 3:5, 6.

This clearly means that the entire Church class, sometimes called "the Body of Christ, which is the Church," and sometimes styled "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife," is to be sharer with the Redeemer in the sufferings of the present life and in the glories of the future. The nearly nineteen centuries of this age, therefore, according to the Scriptures, have been for the purpose, not of giving the world its trial for everlasting life or death, but for the trying, testing, the electing or selecting of the Church, and her perfecting with her Lord as sharers in "His resurrection," the "first resurrection."—Phil. 3:10; Rev. 20:6.

We have in the past made two serious mistakes respecting the Divine purposes. One was that we assumed without Scriptural authority that the whole world is now on trial for eternal life, failing to see that it is merely the elect Church, the consecrated class. The other mistake is that we reasoned as though the Church were part of the world, and, therefore, that the trial of the Church meant the trial of the world. But hearken to the Scriptures respecting the Church: "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world!" (John 15:19.) "I have chosen you out of the world." and again, "Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, which is in heaven," "in the day of (their) visitation."—1 Pet. 2:12; Matt. 5:16.

Two Different Rewards.

We should notice also the wide difference between the reward promised the Church and that proffered the world. In both cases the reward will be everlasting life. In both cases this will mean

full harmony with God, because, "All the wicked will God destroy." And again we read that "Whosoever hath the Son hath life, and whosoever hath not the Son shall not see life." So, then, the attainment of everlasting life, either by the Church class or by the world, will mean coming into full harmony with the heavenly Father and with the Lord Jesus, by the merit of Christ's sacrifice. It will mean a full turning away from sin and a full devotion to God and to righteousness.

The difference will be as to nature. The reward for the world will be earthly nature, human nature, with everlasting life in an earthly Paradise or Eden—worldwide. Man never lost a spiritual or heavenly condition through Adam's disobedience, or in any other manner. He never had such a condition or nature, nor a right to it, that he could lose it. He was made man, "a little lower than the angels." His crown of glory and honour was an earthly crown. His dominion was over the birds of the air, over cattle and over the fish of the sea. This which he lost Jesus paid the redemption price for at Calvary; and these things lost are the very things which Jesus and His elect Bride will restore to mankind during the thousand years of the Messianic kingdom. Thus we read: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke 19:10.

Partakers of the Divine Nature.

The reward of the Church, eternal life, perfection and harmony with God, will be on the spirit plane—wholly different from the human. Man in perfection will again be a little lower than the angels; but the Church, as the Body of Christ, will share with her Lord in His exaltation, "far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named"

—the divine nature. This reward comes to the Church under a special covenant of sacrifice, which the Bible specifies.

This Church class, like her Lord, must sacrifice the earthly nature, earthly interests, hopes and aims, and must be begotten of the Father to a heavenly, spirit nature, in order to be a sharer in the First Resurrection; and she must enter into her reward before the Messianic kingdom can be established for the blessing of mankind in general—the saving of the world from sin and from death.

Thus the apostle wrote that the groaning creation “waits for the manifestation of the sons of God,” (Rom. 8:19.) “Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be (how glorious, how great), but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him.” Our resurrection change will make us like the Saviour; as it is written, “We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

“Commandeth All to Repent.”

Come back again to St. Paul's words. He does not say that God commanded the Church to sacrifice, for if sacrifice were a command it would cease to be a sacrifice. Nowhere are God's people commanded to present their bodies living sacrifices, nor to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, nor to take up the cross and follow Him. To the saintly these sacrificing features are set forth as a privilege—as an opportunity. If they do these things the Divine arrangement is that through the imputation of Christ's merit their sacrifice will be holy and acceptable unto God, and they will be granted a share with the Redeemer in His high exaltation—the reward of sacrifice, of self-denial, of loving, voluntary service to God, the truth and the brethren.

But to the world in general the Lord issues a command, viz., Repent; turn from your sins; come back to me; seek my face; seek to know and do my will. The basis of this command is the Divine declaration that God's grace has provided redemption in the blood of Jesus, a reconciliation through His blood, and that by and by the whole world will be on trial for life or death everlasting, in a great day of trial, which God has ordained and over which Christ and the Church will supervise, as Judges.

Whoever comes to a knowledge of this great Divine arrangement through Christ has an incentive to live righteously, soberly and godly in this present time. Whoever hears and heeds this command is laying up for himself a good treasure of character and preparation for his trial for life in the great Judgment Day of the Messianic kingdom. Whoever ignores this knowledge and "sows to the flesh" will find himself reaping to the flesh further weakness, further degradation and severer stripes or punishments in that great thousand-year Judgment Day.

Berean Questions.

1. What would constitute an idol from a Scriptural standpoint?

Answer.—Anything that would interfere with affections toward and full worship of God. 1 John 5:21; Ex. 20:2, 3; Col. 3:2, 5.

2. How long is the world's Judgment Day?

Answer.—Rev. 20:4, 6; 2 Pet. 3:8.

3. Is the Judgment Day a day of wrath and condemnation or a day of blessing and opportunity?

Answer.—Acts 17:31; Acts 10:42, 43; Psalms 9:7, 8, 9; Psalm 96:11-13; Psalm 98:4-9; Isaiah 26:9; John 12:47.

4. Will sin and evil be at once stamped out when that day begins?

Answer.—It will be a gradual work. Jeremiah 33:8; Ezekiel 36:24-27; Jeremiah 31:33, 34.

6. If the saints with Christ are to judge the world, when are the saints to be judged?

Answer.—1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Cor. 11:31, 32; James 1:12.

6. What is the hidden mystery

Answer.—Eph. 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; Eph. 1:4-14; Eph. 2:17-22; Eph. 3:3-6.

7. Where are the promises that the saints are to share Christ's throne?

Answer.—Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 2:26, 27; Matt. 19:28.

8. Mention some Scriptures which distinctly show the difference in calling of the Church and world.

Answer.—Acts 15:14, 16, 17; 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:10; Rom. 8:18-22; John 10:10; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10; Heb. 11:39, 40.

9. What was it that was lost through sin?

Answer.—Heb. 2:7, 8; Rom. 5:12; Gen. 3:22-24.

10. What did Christ's death secure?

Answer.—Matt. 18:11; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Rom. 5:17.

11. Why then are the saints promised a heavenly home?

Answer.—John 14:2, 3; Matt. 19:28; John 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:2; Obad. 21.

12. Is there any punishment for those who, seeing the opportunity to sacrifice, refuse to take up the cross?

Answer.—No, it is an invitation, not a command. 2 Cor. 6:1.

STUDY VII.

OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING.

This study consists of extracts from an unknown writer, who, however, was evidently a faithful and careful student of God's Word.

No one can read the New Testament with care without discovering that the members of the early Church were men of hope as well as men of faith. Indeed, hope seems, more than faith, to have been the outstanding feature of the character. Not that they really had more of this than that; the twain were one; they formed one noble edifice, one stately ship. But faith was the foundation work; hope, raised upon it, caught the eye of the beholder. Faith lay beneath the water line; hope reared the mast and spread the sail high in the sight of men. Their faith looked back to Calvary; but, in a sense, it was an act completed. They were not always looking backward; forward they peered, with steady gaze. The attitude of expectation was their daily, hourly attitude. Something was about to happen—someone was coming—and they are seen to be on tip-toe, looking for and hastening unto the event. To them it clearly seemed a consummation most devoutly to be wished. They constantly referred to it as “a lively hope,” “that blessed hope,” “this hope,” “one hope,” “our hope,” “the hope of our calling,” “the hope set before us.” Every reference shows that it completely filled their hearts, and was the dominating influence in their lives.

The hope thus cherished was not of a private kind, attainable by this believer at a certain time, and that one at another. It was one great hope, to be



fulfilled to all the Church, not even excluding them that slept, at one defined and selfsame time. "No prophecy of Scripture is of a private interpretation." and this hope, it is evident, was not to be fulfilled to individual believers. It was not a matter of personal and private experience; not the coming of Christ to the individual heart, nor the approach of death to each separate person; but something affecting the entire community of Christians at the same point of time.

What was that hope which so controlled and cheered those early saints? None other than "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." They believed with all their hearts in Jesus Christ, in His wondrous life of miracle and grace, and in His sacrificial death on Calvary's sad tree. They believed that He had triumphed o'er the grave, and had come forth to resurrection life. They remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said unto them, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." They had heard "two men in white apparel" say, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." With simple faith they all accepted these great promises. The authority appeared to them sufficient, the meaning transparent. The Lord had gone; the Lord would come. He had disappeared from view, but only for "a little while," until the times of restitution." (Acts 3:19, 21.) When these times came, He would come again, and each one seemed to say, "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This was to them the "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves."

It was the Lodestar of Their Life.

the goal and climax of their being, and round it their communion with each other, like their testimony to the world, continually revolved.

Even if men try, they cannot keep this subject out of sight, so long as the New Testament is read. The late beloved evangelist, D. L. Moody, made the admission that he was originally much opposed to this doctrine, "until," said he, "from constantly meeting with it in the reading of Scripture, I was constrained to become a believer in it; and now it is, to my mind, one of the most precious truths in the whole Bible."

First Thessalonians is usually recognised as the earliest epistle we possess. In our inquiry now it is of value, then, to note that the belief in Christ's return was a conspicuous feature of the Church to which it was addressed. In the opening chapter the apostle testifies, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." The second chapter ends with a reference to the prospect of meeting "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." At the close of chapter three the prayer is offered, "That he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Chapter four finishes with the announcement, made by direct inspiration, that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." In chapter five the letter is brought to a conclusion with the prayer that they who received it may be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Second Thessalonians the apostle declares "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven

with his mighty angels." He beseeches the brethren to steadfastness "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." He speaks of "the brightness of his coming," and the "consolation and good hope" it brings; also he prays, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

First Corinthians is another of the older writings; and it proves that there at Corinth, as at Thessalonica, the Church had taken up the hope of which we speak. "Ye come behind in no gift," says the apostle, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He tells them not to sit in judgment upon one another, but to wait "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." Above the table where they sit to celebrate the scene on Calvary, he writes the superscription,

" Till He Come ";

and over all the tombs where sleep the silent saints, he carves the sentence, bringing hope and joy, "Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

In the Epistle to Phillippians the time of the Advent is repeatedly referred to as "The day of Jesus Christ," and for it they are taught to wait. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain." It is clear that the Phillippians shared the apostle's hope, because he says, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,

who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

In the Epistle to Colossian saints, the same glad note is rung: "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Everything in the early Church was made to hinge upon the coming of the Lord.

To Timothy, the apostle Paul gives various charges, and he makes each binding "until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ." In view of the same event he shows that he can hold death in contempt: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

To Titus, too, he makes it clear that, by this truth, not only is the fear of death removed, but life is made pure and beautiful, men "live soberly, righteously, and godly," "looking for that blessed hope."

The Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with all the other apostolic writings. Repeatedly it speaks of the expected day.

"Unto Them That Look for Him"

shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works . . . and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." "Cast not away therefore your confidence . . . for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

The apostle James adopts the same appeal: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience

for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The apostle Peter makes much use of Second Advent truth. It is the vermillion and the gold with which he illuminates his precious manuscripts. To saints in suffering he writes, and thus he seeks to cheer their hearts: "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith . . . might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "When his glory shall be revealed, ye shall be glad with exceeding great joy." "When the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . . But, beloved. . . . the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness, . . . but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." "What manner of persons ought ye to be, . . . looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Saint John cherishes the same glad hope, and seeks by it to strengthen and to stimulate the Church. "My little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is; and every

man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

As for the Book of the Revelation, it really is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ," and is all about the Second Advent. In it we have the facts, circumstances and judgments connected with the Lord's unveiling, or apocalypse. "Behold he cometh," is the burden of the book; and there can be no understanding of the "words of this prophecy," if the coming of the Lord be doubted, or be lost to view. Again and again, in the midst of its mysteries, the Master's voice is heard crying, "Hold fast till I come!" "Behold I come as a thief;

"Blessed is He That Watcheth."

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." To this, the seer himself would have us all say "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is well for us to scan the Scriptures thus, in order that, by line on line, we may convince ourselves what was the hope that cheered and edified the early Church. After a reading such as this, there is no room for doubt regarding it. The hope they had was that of Jesus Christ's return, and nothing else can be maintained as answering to the language they employed.

It could not be a spirit blessing they were looking for—a coming of the Lord into their hearts, for quickening and enlightenment; for such sweet spiritual presence they had never lost. "Lo, I am with you alway," He had said, "even to the end of the world"; and evermore "Christ in the heart the hope of glory" was to them a living, grand reality. They did not need a coming of that kind.

Papias of Hierapolis, the intimate friend and companion of Polycarp, taught the coming of the Lord in all the churches that he visited. Justin

Martyr, about A.D. 150, spoke of those as "destitute of just reason who did not understand that which is clear from all Scripture, that two comings of Christ are announced."

Nor was it death for which these early saints were waiting. Not one of them is known to have confounded that with Christ's return. In no epistle is death set before the Christian as the subject of his hope. The approach of death, the enemy, can never be the coming of the Lord—his friend. It may be that the time between the hour of death and the morn of resurrection shall pass even as "the twinkling of an eye"; one moment may be heard the voices of earthly friends around the bed, and the next (as it appears) that call that wakes the sleepers in the tomb. But we must carefully distinguish between things that differ. Falling asleep is not the same as waking, though hardly an instant may appear to pass between them; nor is grim death the coming of the Lord, though no time seems to elapse between the two events. If it be otherwise, and the return of Christ means the believer's death, then is the Resurrection "past already," for that is always associated with the Lord's return. But against this heresy we are expressly warned.

No; if Greek and English words have any meaning, those employed by the apostles with their equivalents in our own mother tongue, all go to show that a personal and glorious coming of the Lord was what those men of God were waiting for. No other coming ever crossed their minds. It was not till the middle of the third century that serious opposition, or even question, arose as to the doctrine of the personal coming and reign of Jesus Christ." "Now," says Mosheim, "its credit began to decline principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the

greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favourite sentiments."

The reason for such unanimity and enthusiasm in the entertainment of this hope must have been both weighty and worthy. The eearly Christians did not lightly hold it, and it would not be with light and careless hands they took it up. They must have had as cogent reasons for believing in, and hoping for, their Lord's return, as they possessed for trusting and rejoicing in His first appearance. Back to the first by faith, and forward to the next by hope, they looked, with as solid assurance in one case as in the other. These were the two pivots on which revolved their Christian life, the two wings on which they mounted up as eagles; neither pivot could be weakened, nor could either wing be clipped, without grave injury immediately ensuing. "Take unto you the whole armour of God," said the apostles, and we may be sure they gave as good reasons why the Christian should "take for a helmet the hope of salvation," as for his "putting on the breastplate of faith and love."

The Lord Had Pledged His Word.

He said distinctly, "If I go . . . I will come again." "I will come to you." "I go away and come again unto you." He spoke of himself as the "Son of man," who should "come in the glory of his Father"; as the "Nobleman" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return"; as the "Master" for whose coming the servants were to watch; the "Bridegroom," whose appearing the wise virgins all would hail; and as the "Lord" who yet would come and reckon with the stewards of His house. In these, and many ways beside, the gracious Lord assured His loved ones He would come again, and they, with trustful

hearts, just took Him at His word. "To doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin." Then, as their faith laid hold, their hope was born; for they soon found, wrapped in the promises of His return, as in a garment fair, all scented with sweet lavender, things rare and beautiful, that made those precious promises the richest heirloom of the Christian Church.

The first thing they discovered there was this, that in the certainty of Christ's return there lay the guarantee—the only guarantee they had—that they would see their Lord. Some of those early saints had seen the Saviour when He stood on earth; but now His words were true, "You see me no more." Oh, how they longed to view Him once again. To many of them the apostle Peter's words were more appropriate, "Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." But all the Church most earnestly desired to look on Him whose love had won their hearts.

We Shall be "Changed" and "See Him as He Is."

They also learned to say, "when He shall appear," and "we shall see Him as He is," "we shall be like Him," "changed into the same image, from glory to glory"; for "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This is a marvellous announcement, and hardly could we credit it, unless it were most clearly given in God's most Holy Word. For the assistance of our faith, it is even given repeatedly, and we can only gratefully accept the truth. The early Christians believed that this "glad change" in them "which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," would be accompanied by the awakening of them "which sleep in Jesus." For their dear ones who were dead, as well as for

themselves, their only hope lay in the Second Advent. They did not say, "There is no death; what seems so is transition." No, they accepted death as a reality. "We believe that Jesus died," they said, "even so," there are "them also which sleep in Jesus." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Still, they are dead, and resurrection is required to make them live. Not by making light of death did they attempt to comfort one another; but by making much, yea, everything, of the sure and certain hope of joyful resurrection, to take place at the coming of the Lord.

They believed that that would be the day of their presentation to the King. By the apostle Paul they were distinctly so informed. In writing to Corinthian saints, he said: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Until that day, on various grounds, they could not be presented. Christ would not even, until then, be King. So long as He was Priest within the veil, they could not go to Him. The type forbade it: "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out." The Lord Himself declared it: "Whither I go ye cannot come." "I will come again and receive you unto myself." For that day of joyful welcome to His court they had to wait. They would "be caught up together to meet the Lord." They could not think of entering His glorious presence until they were "presented." They could not be presented until they were prepared and fitly robed. Not in the drab dress of this mortal body could they stand before Him. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." But they believed that when He came this necessary change in their apparel would

be wrought; and then should they be brought into the presence of the King in "raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold," "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

That would be the time, then, of their triumph and reward. Sometimes when men die their friends affirm they have gone to their reward; but

Not so said the Early Church.

They could not; for the Lord had definitely named another time than that of death: "Thou shalt be recompensed," said He, "at the resurrection of the just"; "in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." "Behold, I come . . . and my reward is with me to give every man [then] according as his work shall be." The apostle Peter confirms that with the word, "When the chief shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory." "Henceforth," said the expiring Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He had no thought of going by himself into the presence chamber, and in some private way receiving his Lord's "welcome" and "well done." No! he wanted "all them, also," whom he had known on earth to be beside him then; especially those whom he had led to taste redeeming love. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" It is when the nobleman returns that he will call his servants, and hold reckoning with them. No wonder, then, that faithful men kept ever in their minds that great event. The coming of the Lord was not denied, nor lost to view, until, in later days than those of

which we speak, the Christian Church had lost its zeal, and in sad, wanton ways was walking with the world.

"Thy kingdom come," He had himself instructed them to pray thus, and they believed that till He came the kingdom would not come. Not for the gradual spread of truth, and conversion of the world, they looked. . . . They knew that all the purposes of God regarding men would be fulfilled, but they appear not to have thought of that as one. The Gospel must be preached in all the world, 'tis true; but they accepted Christ's own words, that this should be but "for a witness unto all nations"; and as James the apostle said, "to take out of them a people for his name." They did not vainly hope the world would better and yet better grow; they knew that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." They never said that things would so improve that the last days of this dark age would be its brightest and its best. "This know," said they, "that in the last days

"Perilous Times Shall Come";

for wickedness shall be rampant even with "a form of godliness." With one consent these early Christians waited for the Lord. By His appearing would His kingdom be secured.

Many members of the early Church were Jews, and for their nation's sake they wanted Christ to come. That day would be a glorious day for them, the time of Israel's repentance and recovery. Then "the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth," and from their eyes the veil shall be removed. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this

is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we shall be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

The thought of Israel's salvation at the Lord's return would make glad the hearts of the Gentile saints as well as Jews; for Israel's restoration, they were told, would girdle the whole globe with the glory of the Lord. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Then it is that the Lord, by His Advent, "shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel"; then it is, and not in this the Gospel day, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Then "He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks."

WHY CHRIST COMES AGAIN.

"Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification."—Romans 4:25.

All true Christians will agree in regard to the purpose of the first presence of Messiah. He Himself declared that He came "to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28.) And the apostle Paul explains the matter more fully in Rom. 5:8-21, showing how completely the one man's sin had involved the whole human race, verse 12, "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all had sinned" [representatively in Adam]. Just so the death of Christ as payment of the penalty for sin will operate to free all from that Adamic guilt. "For this is good in the sight of God our Saviour

who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. (1 Tim. 2:3-6.) "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"—Heb. 2:9.

That was the difficult part, the suffering part of the great mission which the only begotten of the Father had undertaken, namely, to restore mankind to the perfection and holiness and harmony with the Great Creator, once enjoyed by our first parents in Eden, as representatives of the human family. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:5.) "He poured out his soul unto death" to free the soul that sinned (Isa. 53:12; Ezek. 18:4), thus liberating from Adamic guilt all involved, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one (even unto death) shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19) so that "As all in Adam die even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:21, 22.) "When thou shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."—Isa. 53:10, 11.

All will probably agree that so far as the world is concerned the pleasure of the Lord has not prospered so far yet, and seeing that Christ "tasted death for every man" and up to the present so few have ever had any opportunity of hearing of the only name whereby they may be saved that our Lord could not be satisfied with the results of His anguish, if only so few were to receive the benefit from His costly sacrifice.

The text declares "he shall see his seed," and we

enquire, who are these referred to as the children of Christ. Nowhere are the saints of the Gospel age referred to as children of Christ, but clearly are spoken of as begotten of God. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten you." (1 Pet. 1:3.) These are styled the Bride of Christ, his brethren but "sons of God." Speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ the apostle says in Heb. 2:11, "He is not ashamed to call them (the sanctified) brethren." This, too, agrees with His own words, "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God."

That our Lord Jesus is, however, to be a Father is clearly shown, and the meaning will be explicitly seen in the Messianic age. He is called "the everlasting Father, the prince of peace." (Isa. 9:6.) In that day the sins of the world, having been atoned for by the Lord Jesus, will in due time be cancelled and every sinner be brought to a full knowledge of the Lord and have the opportunity of forgiveness and restoration to divine favour provided in the "only name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) The world of mankind dealt with during that time will not be begotten of the spirit to a new nature, as the members of the Gospel Church are, but will instead, by a course of obedience, attain restitution to the perfection of human nature. For "the son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

There is so much in the prophetic writings concerning the glories of Christ's kingdom and its blessings that it is not surprising that Israel of old looked for the establishment of an early kingdom and even after the resurrection of Christ the disciples enquired, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel."

The prophets, "moved by the holy spirit," did

not understand their own utterances when they "spake of the sufferings of Christ," and even the angels desired to learn what was signified.—1 Pet. 1:10, 12.

How beautiful must have been that Sabbath day's journey to Emmaus, when "he who spake as never man spake," full of grace and truth, simply and completely explained the Scriptures from Moses and all the prophets concerning Himself; how He must first suffer these things and then enter into His glory. Those who have in these last days been feasting upon the further revelation of truth concerning the incoming age and the kingdom of Christ which will operate to lift up the fallen race, can realise something of the experience of these two favoured pilgrims to Emmaus as their hearts burned within them while He talked with them by the way.

While, however, the sacrifice for sin was made, and that part of the great mission of salvation—in giving His life a ransom—was finished at the cross, it is easy to see that, even though justice might be satisfied in regard to the Adamic sin, if man were at once released from this condemnation, while in his weak condition, mentally, morally, and physically, he could not keep the Divine requirements of a perfect man. It is for this purpose Christ comes again, that by a course of judgments, punishments for transgressions and rewards for righteousness and every effort to conform to the Divine requirements, He might gradually assist man out of the mire and clay of inherited and aggravated weakness, up the highway of holiness, once more into the likeness of God in heart and mind. That is why this day of a thousand years is called "the times of restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3: 20, 21.) The apostle

Peter thus informs us of the time when Jesus comes again and the purpose of His coming.

Satan, though unseen by men, has been the "prince of this world," ruling in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Now Satan is to be dethroned, and Christ, the Prince of Peace, will reign instead, so "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5:21.) So our Lord may not be expected to appear a second time in a body of flesh to make an offering for sin, for He plainly said, "My flesh I give for the life of the world." It was for that very purpose that He "left the glory which he had with the Father and was made flesh." "He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18, Am. Rev.) "Sown a natural body raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:44.) "We look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body (body of humiliation) that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (Phil. 3:20, 21.) "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh henceforth know we him (so) no more."—2 Cor. 5:16; 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3.

Does the question arise, as to the reason for the long delay in setting up the kingdom and why the Lord did not do so immediately after His resurrection?

In view of the clearer understanding of God's great purpose two good reasons will be obvious. (1) It was evidently predetermined that 6,000 years should be the time during which man should gain his experience as the result of sin and that during that time the race would multiply so that the earth may be filled. (2) There was the particular feature of the great plan to be accomplished during this Gospel age, namely, the choosing of the

Church, the Abrahamic seed (Gal. 3:16 and 29) the Bride of Christ.

Selecting a Bride.

The work of the Gospel age is beautifully symbolised in the 24th of Genesis. Many have thought that there is no spiritual food for the Christian in the Old Testament Scriptures, but this is a great mistake, the more fully we understand the spiritual teachings of the Lord and the apostles, the more we are able to discern those things written of old for our admonition. (1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Pet. 1:12.) In this instance Isaac represents Christ, as also in chapter 22, where he had been offered on the altar as a figure of God's only begotten Son being sacrificed as the world's ransom price. Abraham's servant (Eliezer) represents the Holy Spirit which has been sent forth since Pentecost selecting the Bride of Christ, and Rebekah symbolises the Church "espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2.) As Isaac stayed with his father while the selection of his bride is made, so Christ is with the Father while the Church is being chosen. (Heb. 1:3, 13; Acts 3:21.) The instruction was quite emphatic, thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, so sinners have not been invited to be members in the Bride of Christ. All are called to repentance and to "as many as received him gave he power (privilege) to become sons of God." "No man can come unto me except the Father, which sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) "No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God as Aaron," As Eliezer went to the house of Bethuel, which word means "the house of God," so it is only to the "household of faith"—believers "justified by faith and at peace with God" that this wonderful privilege of consecrating themselves to

God and becoming "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17) comes.

It was at the "well of water" that the servant met Rebekah, so it is through the "word of truth" that we receive our hope towards God. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."—James 1:18.

Then there was the bethrothal, the gift of golden earring, or, as the marginal reading states, "an ornament for the forehead." Either emblem would be beautiful. Gold always speaks of Divine things, a golden earring would indicate an "ear to hear" the Divine promises. The golden ornaments on the forehead would signify "sealed with the holy spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) The golden bracelets (10 shekels weight) being placed upon her hands would mean that all her works would henceforth be for Isaac. (Col. 3:17.) Ten shekels intimating how completely this would be, as the number ten appears in the Scripture to denote completeness.

So it is with the consecrated. What wonderful hopes are ours! Surely "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, the things which God hath reserved for them that love him,"—

"We stand all astonished with wonder
And gaze at the ocean of love."

We realise that the invitation is so wonderful and that all we have or can hope for in this life is so small in comparison that the apostle's exhortation of Rom. 12:1 to "present our bodies living sacrifices," holy and acceptable to God (on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ), is indeed the only reasonable service we can offer. We come into His courts with praise, and enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and say—

"All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
All my being's ransomed powers,
All my thoughts and words and doings
All my days and all my hours.

Let my hands perform His bidding,
Let my feet run in His ways,
Let my eyes see Jesus only,
Let my lips speak forth His praise.

Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus
I've lost sight of all beside—
So enchained my spirit's vision
Looking at the Crucified."

The story continues. The contract is arranged, and further gifts are made—"jewels of silver, jewels of gold." Not until consecration is made to the Lord can we begin to understand the deep spiritual truths of God's Word. When, however, we have been begotten of the Spirit we can discern spiritual things, so "still new beauties do we see and still increasing light." Silver represents truth and the gold symbolises the "exceeding great and precious promises that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4.) The raiment provided (verse 53) would indicate change of nature, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things have passed away and behold all things have become new."—2 Cor. 5:17.

The king's daughter is all glorious within. Her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle work. (Psa. 45: 13, 14.) This would show that while the wedding garment is provided by the great Bridegroom, the Bride class "must work out their own salvation" by weaving into the robe the character, the various graces of the Holy Spirit until the heart and mind have been transformed into the likeness of God's dear Son—the great Bridegroom.

Peter speaks of this process of adding to faith by which we are justified. (2 Pet. 1:5-11.) Virtue,

fortitude, Christian character, consecration, then knowledge, which apart from consecration might puff up the mind, but received into a humble heart will nourish and sustain, then moderation, control, the spirit of a sound mind is necessary to make proper use of the knowledge attained, and patience or the cheerful endurance of hardship, that we may be properly exercised by our experiences, and further developed in piety, godliness, sterling character, justness, a clear perception and determination to carry out that which is right—pleasing to God. Brotherly love must also grow, a love that loves God, must love also him that is begotten of God. "He that saith he loves God and hateth his brother is a liar." (1 John 4:20.) But while it is easy to love the brethren in Christ, to love them that love us, there is a further step into the likeness of Christ, for "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

We must love all men, yes, even our enemies. "Love your enemies bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray (that is, not formally, but with desire for their good) for them which despitefully use you and persecute you that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven." —Matt. 5:44, 45.

In the story we are considering, there is still another point to notice. The mother and brother desired to delay the departure of Rebekah, and she was allowed to decide the matter. How definite is the decision, "I will go with this man." So should it be with us, if we come to realise the "hope of our calling," "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Does the narrow way seem long, does the long journey over the desert of the Gospel age seem hard and dreary, then surely we have not realised all the joy that awaits the called in Christ Jesus at the other side.

No doubt Rebekah had heard of her uncle Abraham and that God had made selection of him for ultimately blessing all the families of the earth through his seed. She had faith in God's promise, and saw the opportunity of coming into line with it by becoming joint-heir with Isaac. Just so with the Christian of the Gospel age, it is only by becoming "joint-heir" with Christ that he can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Rebekah had never seen Isaac, and yet here she was ready to go and be his wife, because of what she had heard of him, and all that the union meant of God's blessing. Just so with the Church, the prospective "Bride of Christ," she can say of her Lord in the words of 1 Pet. 1:8, "Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

So Rebekah is willing to "forget her father's house" (Psa. 45:10) as the Church is willing to leave the human nature the Adamic family, and journey over the desert, the Gospel age, on the ten camels, the complete promises of God. Then the end of the journey is reached. There is a "man in the field." Rebekah enquires of "the servant," the Church enquires of the Holy Spirit concerning the signs in the world, and learns of the presence of the Son of man. While the world is not aware, for He comes "as a thief in the night," "ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." And while there is the sound of a trumpet a proclamation of His presence, it is only those who have "ears to hear" that can catch the sound. Rebekah's nurse is not shown in the picture as noticing the man in the field; no, she evidently represents those who have not the full deep interest of the Bride class, but are shown elsewhere as "the virgins her companions" Psa. 45:14) or the five foolish virgins in the parable of

Matt. 25, or "the great company that serves before the throne" (Rev. 7:9, 14, 15) instead of being in the throne as "the queen in gold of Ophir."—Psa. 45:9.

Then shall it be true that "the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. 19:7), and not only the "Bride class" will be gathered around the wells of water of truth, for "then the Spirit and the bride shall say, Come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17.

That will be the day when Christ will be "the everlasting Father," He will give life to all the willing and obedient, for He has "the keys of death and of hell." First He will take hold of those still alive, but in whom death still reigns, and teach them how to live.

The obedient will soon find that as a result they are growing stronger mentally and physically, and gradually death will be vanquished, not, however, until sin is overcome. "Death is the last enemy to be destroyed." Then, too, there are those in the tomb, and Messiah has also the "keys of hell" (grave) and will unlock the great prison-house of death and all that are in their graves shall come forth. (John 5:25; Acts 24:15.) The great work will not be accomplished in confusion or hurry. God's great plan proceeds with majestic steppings, and the Scripture shows clearly that the ancient people Israel are to have the first privileges of that time, and that then the blessings will gradually flow through them to all the world.

In that day when sin, sorrow, trouble and death have been stamped out, and when victory over the grave is complete, when the earth is made a glorious happy home for the human family, and filled with a perfect race, when there is not a stain of

sin, not an unkind word or look to mar the peace and goodwill among men, Christ shall see (the result) of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. He shall see His seed, for He as the second Adam with the Church His Bride, will be the everlasting Father of the race redeemed by His death. From our first parents we receive a dying existence, but all the willing and obedient in that time will receive everlasting life, from the great Life-giver, of Whom it is written, "Who shall declare his generation?" The matter is shown also in the blessing pronounced upon Rebekah as the type of the "Lamb's wife." "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions," which is in harmony with the Abrahamic blessing. "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven (the spiritual seed, the heavenly calling, the Church) (Gal. 3:29) and as the sand which is upon the seashore" (Gen. 22:17) (the earthly seed).

The Parousia First—The Epiphania and Apokalupsis Follow.

As in the distance the various peaks of the mountain are blended so as to be undiscernible, so in the distance the various features of the Second Advent of our Lord were indistinct. But now is our salvation near—"nearer than when we first believed"; and we should expect that the holy spirit, which we were assured would bring truth to the attention of the Lord's people as "meat in due season," would continue to "show them things to come" as they would be due to be understood. And thus we have found it, praise the Lord! God's Word is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. In its light we can now see that our Master will be present for a time, in the harvest time of this age—invisibly present doing a work in His Church, before any outward sign or revealing to the world takes place. His work in His

Church will be the separating of the true from the merely nominal—the “wheat” from the “tares.” His revealing will be in the “flaming fire” the great time of trouble with which this age will close, and in which the “tares” shall cease to be “tares”; but before that fire can come, as the parable was given to show, He will be present in His wheatfield gathering the wheat in the garner and bundling the tares for the burning.

Another parable also shows that before revealing himself in any manner to the world, He calls first His own servants and reckons with them. (Luke 19:15-27.) Ah! dear brethren, what a holy awe it brings to our hearts to know that we are now living in the presence of the Son of Man; that now the “wheat” is being gathered and the “tares” being bundled;—that now the servants are reporting their use of the pounds and talents entrusted to them, while the world sees nothing and enquires, “Where is the promise of His presence, while all things continue as they were from the beginning?” Nor can any but the few hear and appreciate the evidences, or understand the Master’s words that as the world knew not in the days of Noah, even thus shall it be in the presence of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:37)—they shall know not, and the ordinary avocations of daily life shall continue,—until disturbed by the commotion and trouble of the Epiphania, the Apokalupsis of the King in the pouring out of the seven last plagues—when the judgments of the Lord shall be abroad in the earth and the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness, and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord’s house. He shall teach us of his ways and we shall walk in his paths.”—Isa. 2:3.

Berean Questions.

1. What do we know of our Lord prior to His becoming man?

Answer.—John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16, 17; John 17:5.

2. Did He still retain His spiritual nature while on earth

Answer.—John 1:14; (Heb. 2:9; compare Heb. 2:6, 7); Phil 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:21.

3. What did He give for the life of the world?

Answer.—John 6:51; Col. 1:21, 22.

4. Did He take back the fleshly body at His resurrection?

Answer.—1 Pet. 3:18; Acts 2:32, 33.

5. What did He receive from the Father as a reward for His willing sacrifice unto death?

Answer.—Acts 5:31; Phil. 2:9, 10; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:22; Eph. 1:20-22.

6. What is the chief theme of the New Testament?

Answer.—The return of Christ, for one verse in every thirteen refers to it more or less directly. In the epistles alone the proportion is much greater, being more like one in ten.

7. Will He be again changed to human nature in order to come again?

Answer.—No. 1 John 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:13; Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:20 (margin)

8. What is the purpose of our Lord's return?

Answer.—2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:8; Eph. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Dan. 7:9; Isa. 11:4.

9. Will he be present for a time without the world being aware of the fact

Answer.—2 Pet. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:2; Luke 17:26; Rev. 16:5.

10. Will He be visible to the world at His second presence?

Answer.—John 14:19; 2 Cor. 5:16; Rev. 1:7. Every-one shall see (perceive) Him.

How will His presence be manifested to the world?

Answer.—Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15, 18; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.

What will be the first work of the Lord on His return?

Answer.—1 Thess. 4:16.

What are the offices of our Lord—(a) At His first advent; (b) During the Gospel Age; (c) During the Messianic Age?

Answer.—(a) Redeemer. Matt. 20:18; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Rom. 14:9. (b) Advocate and Highpriest for the Church. Heb. 4:15, 16; Heb. 7:25, 26; Heb. 8:1; 1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:34. (c) Mediator. Acts 3:22; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. Blessing all the families of the earth as heir of the promise given to Abraham. Gal. 3:16.

How does the work of the first advent stand in relation to that of the second presence?

Answer.—The work of the second advent could not be inaugurated until the Ransom Sacrifice had been accomplished. Christ there secured the right to lift man out of the death condition. Rom. 14:9.

Why did not Christ establish His Kingdom immediately after His resurrection?

Answer.—Because an interval of the Gospel Age was necessary for the development of the Church, His joint-heirs. Heb. 2:10.

What feature of God's plan has been progressing during the Gospel Age?

Answer.—Acts 15:14; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:13, 14; Gal. 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2.

How will the second presence of Christ be known to the Church?

Answer.—By the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens (the ecclesiastical systems). Matt. 24:30, 31, or in other words the "Harvest," or the separation of wheat and tares, would begin. Matt. 13:30; Matt. 24:28; Luke 13:34-37; Matt. 5:6.

When all sin is subdued and the work of Christ's kingdom is completed, what then does the Son do?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:28.

"AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."

Isa. 11:1-9; Isa. 65:17-25.

"And a little child shall lead them,
O blessed, blessed time,
The song of peace will never cease,
The joyful bells will chime:
And angel choirs again will sing,
Proclaiming Jesu's reign—
'Glory to God on high! Goodwill!
And peace on earth again.'"

"And a little child shall lead them,
The dread and pomp of war,
The captive's groan, the angry tone.
The battle's awful roar—
No more disturbs the harmony
Of earth's desired repose;
The wilderness and desert place,
Shall blossom as a rose."

And a little child shall lead them,
The meek, the good, the kind
Will see the birth of gladsome earth,
And sweet enjoyment find.
Then age to age will pass along
While praise will flow above
To Him who came and died for all
To prove His wondrous love."

STUDY VIII.

SPIRITISM, MORMONISM, ETC.

Their Mysteries Explained.

A correct understanding of the Bible's teachings respecting the Spirit world is positively essential to a satisfactory solution of many phenomena of the past, and present. It is a well-known adage that "mystery hath charms," and no one understands this better than Satan himself. By enshrouding his kingdom in darkness, and in throwing an air of mystery around his workings, many indeed have been entrapped from all walks of life, who otherwise might never have been attracted to his side at all. Those who most thoroughly disbelieve in Spiritism are often the most ready to test its professed claims; and when convinced that many of its claims are genuine and many of its manifestations supernatural, these former disbelievers are more liable to become its devotees: whereas if they had known just what Spiritism is, and how and by what power it operates, they would be on guard, and their judgment would have a support and guidance which it otherwise lacks. It is the lack of the true knowledge of Spiritism (imparted through the Scriptures and confirmed by indisputable evidences from outside the Scriptures) which causes so many to fall a prey to this delusion.

True, there are frauds committed in the name of Spiritism; but these are chiefly in connection with attempted "materialisations." That Spiritists have done and can do, through some power or agency, many wonderful works beyond the power of man, has been abundantly proved in a variety of

cases—some of them before scientific men, total unbelievers. Tambourines have been played while in the air beyond the reach of human hand and suspended by some invisible power; chairs have been lifted into the air while people were sitting upon them, and without any connection with any visible power or agency; mediums have been floated through the air, etc. The rapping tests, the table-tipping tests the autograph tests and the slate-writing tests have been proved over and over again, to the satisfaction of hundreds of intelligent people in various parts of the world.

"The Dead Know Not Anything."—Eccl. 9:5.

The claim of Spiritists is, that these manifestations and communications from unseen intelligences are from human beings, who once lived in this world, but who, when seeming to die, really became more alive, more intelligent, freer, and every way more capable and competent than they had ever been before. It is claimed that the purpose of these manifestations is to prove that the dead are not dead but alive; that there is no need of a resurrection of the dead, because there are no dead—the dead being more alive than ever, after passing into what is termed death. To-day, not only in heathen lands but amongst the most civilised, it is freely believed (and by many Christians considered Scriptural to believe the nonsensical) that a dead man is more alive than before he died. People of good, sound, reasoning faculties on ordinary subjects seem to be thoroughly deceived by this falsehood of Satan, "ye shall not surely die." So true is this, that it seems not inconsistent to them to say that a man hit over the head with a stick and knocked senseless knows nothing, but a man hit over the head harder and killed, knows everything. We shall not stop here to show how

inharmonious all this is to the testimony of Scripture upon this subject, but merely cite the reader to the Word of the Lord; reminding him that, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, . . . then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." —1 Cor. 15:13, 18; Job 14:21; Psalms 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

The Beginning of Deception.

Here is the point of infatuation. As soon as the unbeliever in Spiritism has been convinced that an unseen intelligence communicates through the medium he is all interest. Nothing else offers such proofs from invisible sources as does Spiritism; and many seem not only willing but anxious to walk by sight rather than by faith. Every one has friends who have died, and thousands are anxious to communicate with them if possible, and to receive from them some message or some advice. It is not surprising, therefore, to find people greatly absorbed in these matters, and very willing to be directed by those whom they esteem their truest friends and most competent advisers.

The majority of people have no true Christian faith built upon the foundation of the Word of God; they have a wish for a future life, and a hope with reference to their dead, rather than a faith with reference to either. As a consequence, their minds being convinced that they have had communication with those beyond the grave, everything relating to the future life becomes more real and more interesting to them than ever before. And many such, wholly ignorant of religious feelings, say to themselves, Now I know what it is to have faith, and a religious feeling with reference to the future, and they congratulate themselves that they have received a great spiritual blessing.

But this is only the first lesson, and these comparatively uplifting experiences belong chiefly to

it. Later experiences will demonstrate, as all Spiritists will freely acknowledge, that there are "evil spirits," "lying spirits," which time and again deceive them; and the messages and revelations, often foolish and nonsensical, gradually lead the investigator to a disbelief of the Bible and the Creator, while they teach and exalt "the spirits" as the only sources of knowledge aside from nature; and thus the way is paved toward advanced lessons on "spirit-affinities," "free love," etc. But after the first deception and shaking of confidence the explanation that there are "both good and bad spirits" is generally satisfactory; and the poor victim follows blindly on, because assured that he communes with some supernatural power.

There are many schools now in existence which have as their basis these spirit deceptions, "doctrines of demons" as the apostle calls them. Notable among these should be mentioned Clairvoyance, Theosophy, New Thought, Unity, Mormonism, Swedenborgianism and Christian Science.

The Mormon Delusion.

As a remarkable illustration of the deceptive work of these "evil spirits" who constantly endeavour to establish as truth Satan's lie to mother Eve, that men do not surely die (Genesis 3:4), notwithstanding God's positive assertion to the contrary, we cite the instance of Joseph Smith, Jr., and his Book of Mormon. It is clear that Mr. Smith was a victim of these "seducing spirits," although many well intentioned people have not suspected that such could have been the case. But from accounts of Smith's boyhood it would appear he was just such a person as might be susceptible to occult influence. Note the remarks of Smith's father-in-law, Isaac Hale, to which he gave affidavit, and which are published in "Religious Creeds and Statistics," as follows:—

"I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, junr., in November, 1825 [when he was scarcely 20 years old]. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who are called 'money-diggers'; and his occupation was that of seeing or pretending to see, by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat placed over his face: in this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasures. Smith and his father boarded at my house while they were employed in digging for a mine."

Had young Smith been a Bible student it might have been he would have been on guard against all occult influences; but his mother, in describing how the family were convinced of the 'wonders' following the finding of the 'golden plates', is quoted as having said: 'I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth; all seated in a circle—father, mother, sons and daughters—all giving the most profound attentions to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life.'"

Joseph Smith a Victim of Spirits.

Reasoning humanly, it would appear strange that a prophet of a new dispensation should not be sufficiently interested in God's Word to have made a careful study of it before being elevated to the position of teacher of Divine Truth. But when we become acquainted with the power and designs of the "evil spirits," the matter becomes easy of solution. They are ever seeking instruments and opportunities for perpetuating Satan's falsehood respecting the state of the dead, they are bent upon contradicting God's Word and the harmonious truth of the Bible. Every spiritist, every seance, and sad to relate, nearly every creed of Christendom, seeks to set forth as truth Satan's deception upon this important matter. Joseph Smith, in

September, 1823, was visited by one of these "lying spirits" who gave his name as Maroni, a man of Israel, of the tribe of Manasseh, who died about 400 A.D., near where Smith was then living, at Palmyra, N.Y. Rev. Spaulding, of Cherry Valley, N.Y., had, some years previously, written a historic novel called "The Manuscript Found," in which he detailed in imagery the early settlers of North America. The book was never published, but was given to a compositor named Sidney Rigdon, a friend of Smith's and who later became an ardent Mormon, and a leader among them. Evidently the Spaulding story had weighed upon the mind of young Smith, and being of an occult turn of mind, one of these "wicked spirits in the heavenlies" seized upon the opportunity. Hence he manifested himself to Smith, as a resurrected early settler of the American continent, and the lad was ready to believe all that was communicated to him. He was then told by the "spirit" that he was commissioned as a prophet of the new dispensation, and that God was going to reveal through him many wonderful things to humanity. Smith was instructed that golden plates would be given him, with power to transcribe them into the English language, that the plates would give a detailed account of the American Indians, and their origin, and reveal "the fulness of the everlasting gospel, as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants." At the appointed time Smith was permitted to find the plates—a phenomenon indeed, but no greater than the phenomena exhibited through spirit-mediums before, and since. The charitable view is that Joseph Smith did not willingly deceive, but he himself was willingly deceived, through his previous tamperings with the occult. The same may be said of the "three witnesses" and of the "eight" who, it is said, declared to their

dying day that they saw and handled the golden plates which the "angel" delivered into the hands of Joseph Smith. The plates vanished after the translation had been completed.

Who Are These Spirits Which Personate the Dead?

We have in the Scriptures most abundant and most positive testimony that no communication could come from the dead until after their awakening. Furthermore, we have positive Scripture testimony (1) that not only some, but all, of these spirits are "evil spirits," "lying spirits," "seducing spirits." The Scriptures forbid that humanity should seek to these for information, and clearly inform us that these demons or "devils" are "those angels to whom was committed the supervision of mankind in the period before the Flood. These angels, instead of uplifting humanity, were themselves enticed into sin, and misused the power granted to them, of materialising in human form, to start another race. (Gen. 6:1-6.) Jude 6, 7 gives conclusive evidence on the subject, and clearly shows the nature of the sin for which the fallen angels were condemned and restrained, when, after mentioning the angels who sinned, he says, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, . . . in like manner giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh." That God prohibits any mixture or blending of natures, and designs that each should keep its own original or first estate, is clearly taught by this passage and also by Lev. 18:23; 20:15, 16. Their illicit progeny was blotted out with the Flood, and themselves were thereafter restrained from the liberty of assuming physical bodies, as well as isolated from the holy angels who had kept their angelic estate inviolate.

The apostle Peter (2 Pet. 2:4) mentions these, saying, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Tartarus] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 6 also mentions that class, saying, "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation [proper condition] he hath reserved in everlasting chains—under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Notice three points with reference to these evil angels:

(1) They are imprisoned in Tartarus, restrained, but not destroyed. Tartarus is nowhere else rendered "hell," but in this one passage. It does not signify the grave, neither does it signify the Second Death, symbolised by the "lake of fire and brimstone"; but it does signify the air or atmosphere of earth.

(2) They have some liberties in this imprisoned condition, yet they are chained, or restrained, in one respect—they are not permitted to exercise their powers in the light, being "under chains of darkness."

(3) This restriction was to continue until "the judgment of the great day."

These fallen angels, or demons, are not to be confounded with Satan the prince of demons, or devils whose evil career began long before—who was the first, and for a time the only, enemy of the Divine government; who, having been created an angel of a superior order, sought to establish himself as a rival to the Almighty and to deceive and ensnare Adam and his race to be his servants; and to a large extent, for a time at least, he has succeeded, as all know. As "the prince of this world," who "now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience," he has indeed a very multitudinous host of deceived and enslaved followers. Naturally he would appreciate the deflection of the

"angels who kept not their first estate," and who were restrained at the time of the Flood; and hence he is spoken of as their chief, "the prince of devils," and no doubt as a superior order of being he exercises some degree of control over the others.

Fallen Angels are Lascivious.

These fallen angels, "demons," have probably very little to interest them amongst themselves; evil beings apparently always prefer to make game of the purer, and apparently take pleasure in corrupting and degrading them. The history of these demons, as given in the Scriptures, would seem to show that the evil concupiscence which led to their fall, before the Flood, still continues with them. They still have their principal pleasure in that which is lascivious and degrading; and the general tendency of their influence upon mankind is toward working mischief against the well-disposed, and the debauchery of those over whom they gain absolute control. It is therefore not surprising that the inevitable fruits of Mormonism were ultimately reaped in the terrible reign of polygamous association between the sexes, debauching morals and dishonouring God, violating even the laws of civilisation—and of which conscientious Mormons themselves are now well ashamed.

We are well aware that many Christian people have reached the conclusion that the Lord and the apostles were deceived, when they attributed to the works of demons conduct that is now considered human propensity and mental unbalance and fits. But all should admit that if our Lord was in error on this subject, His teachings would be an unsafe guide upon any subject.

Notice the personality and intelligence attributed to these demons in the following Scriptures:

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; devils also believe and tremble." (Jas. 2:19.) Do human propensities "believe and tremble?" The demons said to our Lord, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And He, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak [further], for they knew that He was Christ." (Luke 4:41.) Another said, "Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are ye?" (Acts 19:15.) The young woman from whom Paul cast out the spirit of sooth-saying and divination (Acts 16:16-19) is a good illustration. Can it be claimed by any that the apostle deprived the woman of any proper talent or power? Must it not be confessed to have been a spirit which possessed and used her body?—an evil spirit unfit to be tolerated there?

"Witchcraft," "necromancy," the "black art," "sorcery," etc., are supposed by many to be wholly delusions. But when we find that they had a firm hold upon the Egyptians, and that God made special provision against them with Israel, we are satisfied that He made no such restrictions either against that which is good, or against that which had no existence whatever. The instruction to Israel was very explicit: they should not have any communion nor make any inquiries through necromancers (those who claimed to speak for the dead; i.e., spirit-mediums); nor with any wizard or witch; nor with any who had occult powers, charms; nor with those who work miracles by means of sorcery and incantation. Read carefully all of the following Scriptures: Exod. 22:18; Deut. 18: 9-12; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; 2 Kings 21:2, 6, 9, 11; 1 Chron. 10:13, 14; Acts 16:16-18; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8; Isaiah 8:19, 20; 19:3.

Did King Saul Speak with the Dead?

The Bible story of King Saul's "seance" with the witch of Endor, a necromancer, or spirit-medium,

as related in 1 Samuel 28:7-20, is an illustration of what is claimed to be performed to-day. Although the law with reference to these mediums was very strict and the punishment death, there were some who were willing to risk their lives because of the gains which could thus be obtained from people who believe that they were obtaining supernatural information from their dead friends—just as with spirit-mediums to-day. King Saul was well aware that there were many of these mediums residing in Israel contrary to the Divine injunction and his own law, and his servants apparently had no difficulty in finding the one at Endor. Saul disguised himself for the interview, but no doubt the crafty woman knew well the stately form of Saul—head and shoulders taller than any other man in Israel. (1 Samuel 9:2.) Hence her particularity to secure a promise and oath from his own lips that no harm should befall her for the service.

The methods used by the evil spirits through the medium at Endor were similar to those in use to-day. They caused to pass before the medium's mental vision the familiar likeness of the aged prophet, Samuel, wearing, as was his custom, a long mantle. When she described the mental (or "astral") picture, Saul recognised it at once as a description of Samuel; but Saul himself saw nothing—he "perceived," from the description, that it was Samuel. Easily convinced, as people under such circumstances usually are, Saul did not stop to question how it could be that Samuel looked as old and as stooped as he looked in the present life, if he was now a spirit being and far better off; nor did he inquire why he wore the same old mantle in the spirit world that he had worn when he knew him as an earthly being. Saul had been forsaken by the Lord and was now easily deceived by these "lying spirits," who personated the prophet and

spoke to Saul in his name, through their "medium," the witch, necromancer, spiritist.

The fallen spirits are not only well informed in respect to all the affairs of earth, but they are adepts in deceit. In answering Saul, the manner and style, and as nearly as could be judged the sentiments of the dead prophet were assumed—the better to deceive. (Thus these "lying spirits" always seek to counterfeit the face, manner and disposition of the dead.) The response was, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" This answer corresponds to the Jewish belief—that when a person died he became unconscious in "sheol," the grave, waiting for a resurrection. (Job 14:12-15, 21; Psalm 90:3; Eccl. 9:5, 6.) Hence the representation is that Samuel was brought up from the grave, and not down from heaven; and that his rest or peaceful "sleep" was disturbed or "disquieted."—Psalm 13:3; Job 14:12; Psalm 90:5; John 11:11, 14.

Saul was easily deceived into thinking that the prophet Samuel who had refused to visit him to have any further converse with him while alive, had been forced to commune with him, by the wonderful powers of the witch. (See 1 Samuel 15:26, 35.) Saul's own testimony was, "God is departed from me and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams."—1 Samuel 28:6, 15.

Would Samuel Obey a Witch Rather than God?

Any rightly informed person will readily see the absurdity of supposing that Samuel would hold any conference whatever with Saul under the circumstance. (1) Samuel (when living) was aware that God had forsaken Saul, and hence Samuel had no right to speak to him and no right to give him any information which the Lord was unwilling to

give him. And Samuel would not do so. (2) It is thoroughly absurd to suppose that a spirit-medium under condemnation of the Lord and prohibited of the right of residence in the land of Israel could have the power at the instance of a wicked king, whom God had deserted, to "disquiet" Samuel and to bring him "up" out of sheol. Was Samuel down in the earth, or was he afar off in heaven? and had the witch the power, in either case to command him to present himself before King Saul to answer his question? Or is it reasonable to suppose that any spirit-mediums have the power to "disquiet" and "bring up" or in any other manner cause the dead to appear to answer the speculative questions of the living?

The "familiar spirit" of the witch, personating Samuel, foretold nothing which Saul himself did not anticipate. Saul knew that God's Word had been passed that the kingdom should be taken from him and his family, and he had sought the witch because of his fear of the Philistine hosts in battle array for the morrow. He expected no mercy for himself and his family, God having told him that David would be his successor. He even anticipated, therefore, the statement which was the only feature connected with this story that indicates in any degree a supernatural knowledge, viz., "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me; the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines." The well-informed demons knew far better than did Saul the strength of the Philistines' position and army, and the weakness of Saul's position and army, and that he himself was already panic-stricken and making this inquiry of the witch-medium because he was distracted at the situation. Any one familiar with the warfare of that time would know (1) that one day's battle would probably settle the question;

and (2) that the death of the king and his household would be the only logical result. Nevertheless, the "familiar spirit" erred, for two of Saul's sons escaped and lived for years. It is even declared by scholars that the battle and the death of Saul did not occur for several days after the visit to the witch.

It is not surprising that Satan and the fallen angels, his consorts in evil, should know considerably more than do men, concerning many of life's affairs. We must remember that by nature they are a higher, more intelligent order than men; for man was made "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5): besides, let us remember their thousands of years of experience, unimpaired by decay and death, as compared with man's "few years and full of trouble," soon cut off in death. Can we wonder that mankind cannot cope with the cunning of these "wicked spirits," and that our only safety lies in the Divine provision that each one who so wills may refuse to have any communication with these demons? The Word of the Lord is, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7.) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring [angry] lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith."—1 Peter 5:8, 9.

How Christ Preached to the "Spirits in Prison."

Let us now consider the hitherto much misunderstood statement of the apostle Peter respecting the lesson given by Jesus to the "spirits in prison" at the time of His death and resurrection. The apostle says:—

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the

spirit. By which also [in addition to this work done for us] he preached to the spirits in prison; which sometime [before] were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."—1 Pet. 3:18-20. (See Diaglott, footnote).

A satisfactory interpretation of this Scripture has long been sought, and but few have found a solution perfectly consistent and satisfying even to themselves. But in view of the truth gleaned from the foregoing suggestions, the above statements of the apostle Peter become luminous.

The preaching was not to men, nor to the spirits of men, but to "spirits," spirit beings; and the preaching was not done by Noah, nor by the Spirit of God, nor before the Flood, but after they had been chained. And the preaching, we hold, was, by example, in the death and resurrection of our Lord.

It seems very clear, therefore, that the spirits are those spirit beings who were disobedient during the days of Noah, and whom God therefore imprisoned or restrained from some of their former liberties and privileges, even "those angels who kept not their own principality, but left their own habitation [or normal condition]. He has kept them in perpetual chains [restraints], under thick darkness, for the judgment of the great day."—Jude 6, Diaglott.

Actions Speak Louder than Words.

This interpretation seems to meet all the circumstances of the case thus far. Now we inquire, In what way could our Lord preach to those spirits during the time He was dead? We answer that it is not so stated. It was by the facts that He preached; as we sometimes say, "actions speak louder than words." It was by His sufferings, death and resurrection that the preaching was done. Thus,

as Jesus went from step to step in His work, His course was preaching a good sermon to those angels who once had been placed in control of man, and had themselves fallen, instead of lifting up mankind. In Jesus they saw exemplified obedience even unto death, and its reward—resurrection to spiritual being of the Divine nature. Such was the great text; and the lesson from it is stated by the apostle (1 Pet. 3:22), viz., that Jesus is now highly exalted and has been given a name (title) above every name; that He is “gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God [the position of highest favour], angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.” They knew Jesus before He left the glory of the heavenly condition and became a man. They knew the object of His self-sacrifice as a man. They saw him obedient even unto death, and then that his high exaltation came as a reward. (Phillippians 2:9.) They must have felt keenly their loss through disobedience, being cut off from communion with God, restrained as unworthy of former liberty and communion with the purer minded of mankind, and their own future an unsolved mystery. We can but image that sorrow and chagrin filled their hearts, as they contrasted their course of disobedience and its unhappy results, with our Lord’s obedient course and its grand results. We can fancy at least some of them saying, Would that we had realised before as fully as we do now, the wide contrast between the results of obedience and disobedience. Would that we might have another trial: with our increased knowledge, our course would be very different.

A clear distinction should be borne in mind, as between Satan and these angels. Satan evidently sinned against great light, so that infinite wisdom

finds no place to do more for him, and his ultimate destruction is clearly predicted.—Heb. 2:14.

But did not the Lord, in Matthew 25:41, declare eternal torment to be the punishment awaiting these fallen spirit beings? No; this Scripture cannot be used as an argument against a hope for a probation for the bound or imprisoned spirits; for though, by force of circumstances and restraint from any other service, they are now Satan's angels—messengers or servants—yet they may not always continue such, if an opportunity be granted them to return to God's service and be angels of God. This passage relates to the "lake of fire" or destruction (Rev. 20:10), into which, at the close of the millennial age, are to be cast all who are out of harmony with God. Satan will be of those cast into everlasting destruction, and with him all who do unrighteousness or have pleasure therein; all of whom, angelic spirits or men on his side, are reckoned to be his angels or messengers. All evil-doers shall be cut off from life. To cut off such, and such only, was God's plan from the beginning. The wilfully wicked and not the merely ignorant, misled, blinded or deceived are meant when it is said, "All the wicked will God destroy."

The Probation of Angels.

Will those "spirits in prison," "those angels which kept not their first estate," and who received such a powerful though silent testimony and lesson from the ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, ever have an opportunity to profit by those lessons? Will they ever have an opportunity to repent of their sin, leave Satan's service and return to loyalty to God?

If at first we thought the Scriptures were silent on the subject, we have found that to be a mistake; and when God speaks we may reasonably conclude

there is something profitable for us to hear. Hence, let us give ear that we may learn whatever our Father deems expedient to communicate.

Jude (verse 6) informs us that those angels which committed fornication and went after strange flesh, "also," "in like manner," to the Sodomites (verse 7), God is keeping under restraint (as a penalty or punishment) "unto [or until] the judgment of the great day." The "great day" is the millennial day, and mankind is also waiting for this judgment (krisis—trial). The apostle Peter's testimony is in harmony (2 Pet. 2:4); and St. Paul settles the matter that these fallen and now imprisoned spirit beings, as well as mankind, will have a trial under the reign of Christ and the Church, "the kingdom of God" in exalted power. Speaking of the impropriety of the saints appealing to earthly courts of justice for adjustment of difficulties between themselves, he says, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"—1 Cor. 6:1-4.

The Greek word here rendered "judge", is *krino*, of the same root as *krisis*, rendered "judgment" in Jude 7, and signifies, to govern, to test; to mete out to each individual blessings or stripes, according to the merit of his course when brought fully into the light of truth, and under all the blessings of the reign of Christ. Thus it is seen that it will be part of the work of the Christ to rule over and direct both human and angelic sinners—"to judge the world" of fallen men, now restrained in death, from which they have been redeemed, and also to judge fallen angels, spirits, restrained alive until this judgment or trial of the great millennial day, when the Church under the Headship of her Lord shall try their cause also, giving everlasting life and favour to those who shall then prove themselves

worthy of it, and everlasting destruction to those proved under full light and opportunity to be unworthy.

Besides these references to the subject, we find frequent references to a work Christ is to do in subjecting heavenly, or spiritual, as well as human powers, after the Church has been selected and the work of judging and blessing is commenced. For instance, we read (Ephesians 1:10), "In the dispensation of the fullness of times, to re-establish [under God's dominion and law] all things in Christ [the disordered things] that are in heaven [spiritual] and on earth [human] in Him."—Douay translation. Again, "In him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace by the blood of his cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things in heaven"—earthly and spiritual transgressors.—Col. 1:20.—Douay.

In Ephesians 3:8-10, it is shown that the length and breadth of God's redemptive plan has been hidden by God until the Gospel age, when the apostles were commissioned to declare to men the conditions upon which they might become sharers with Christ in the execution of God's loving plan; and the intent is, ultimately, to have all the heavenly or spiritual beings know, through the instrumentality of the Church, the boundless wealth that is in God's great gift—His Son—and the different methods and steps His wisdom marked out for all His creatures. We quote the passage from the Diaglott translation:—

"To me, the very lowest of the saints, was this favour given—to announce among nations the glad tidings—the boundless wealth of the Anointed One: even to enlighten all as to what is the [method of] administration [or operation] of that secret

[plan] which has been concealed from the ages by that God who created all things; in order that now [henceforth] may be made known to governments and the authorities in the heavenlies, through [the instrumentality of] the congregation [the Church] the much diversified wisdom of God, according to a plan of the ages, . . . which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It would appear, then, that God's bountiful plan and diversified wisdom contain something of interest to the angels, and, if of interest to any, of special interest to those confined, or restrained, and awaiting a trial in the judgment of the great Messianic day. They see the saints and seek to look into things revealed by the Spirit and Word to these; but in no other way can they learn of their future, or what provision has been made for themselves in the boundless wealth and diversified wisdom of God, because, as here stated, it is to be "made known" "through the Church."

Other Sermons Preached to Angels.

These condemned angels have been learning much since the first text and sermon; not only the lesson of our Lord's obedience and exaltation (1 Pet. 3:18-20; 1 Tim. 3:16), but also of His followers; for we read that "we are made a spectacle both to angels and to men." (1 Cor. 4:9.)—Diaglott. The spectacle and lesson are to both men and angels for the reason that both men and angels will shortly be judged by the Church, and blessed by it, if found obedient and worthy of life. When the testimony in due time is given, all things, both in heaven (the spiritual condition) and on earth (the human), shall bow to Jehovah's Anointed and confess Him their Lord and Ruler; and those who refuse obedience to His righteous authority shall be cut off from life—destroyed as unworthy of life.—Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Acts 3:23.

The angels that sinned in the days of Noah have had a bitter experience since; no doubt death would have been preferable in many respects. Cut off from association with good angels, and placed in companionship of each other and Satan, without God and having no hope, they must have had a terrible experience with sin's demoralising effects, while their observation of mankind, dying on account of sin, would lead them to surmise that death might ultimately be their portion also. That such was the fear of these unclean spirits is evidenced by the protest of one whom the Lord cast out: "Art thou come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; Matt. 8:29.) But this no more proves that their suppositions were correct, than the belief of millions of professed Christians, that nine-tenths of humanity will be everlastingly tormented, proves that to be so. The fact is, we find that Satan, who taught men thus to blaspheme God's character by his misrepresentation of the Divine plan, was the master and chief over these cast-down spirits; and evidently he has misrepresented Jehovah's plan to the imprisoned spirits as he has to men. He is the father of lies.

Neither can we forget the respectful conduct of the fallen spirits toward our Lord and His apostles and the message they delivered; far more respectful indeed than that of the strictest sect of the Jewish Church. While the latter scoffed and said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph. (John 6:42); the fallen spirits exclaimed, "Thou art the Son of God." (Mark 3:11.) While the former said, "Thou hast a devil and art mad," the latter said, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."—Mark 1:24.

The "legion," which had crazed the Gadarene, worshipped Christ, acknowledging Him to be the "son of the Most High God."—Mark 5:6, 7.

While they respected the true, they opposed the false, saying to some who pretended to exorcise them—"Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them."—Acts 19:16.

Both Jews and Gentiles beat and stoned the messengers of God, when they came among them with the glad tidings of salvation; but some of these fallen angels seemed desirous of spreading the glad tidings. One followed the apostles Paul and Silas, saying "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us [angels and men] the way of salvation."—Acts 16:17.

If God has some blessing for these fallen angels in event they reform we shall be glad. But the Scriptures are very explicit in declaring that Satan, their prince, is incorrigible, and will be destroyed.—Heb. 2:14.

Berean Questions.

1. Are angels immortal?

Answer.—No, for some are to be destroyed. 1 Tim. 6:16; Matt. 25:41; Jude 6.

2. What is meant by the angels being "cast down to hell"?

Answer.—They were degraded and not permitted to return to their heavenly home but confined in Tartarus. This word has been translated "hell," but refers to the earth's atmosphere.

3. Did the witch of Endor really communicate with Samuel?

Answer.—Samuel was dead, and the dead know not anything. Eccl. 9:5; Job 14:12.

4. What was the real source of the information communicated?

Answer.—1 Sam. 28:7. The witch was associated with the fallen angels, and as their medium communicated to Saul information received from them. Isa. 19:3.

5. Where are the dead, and what is their condition?

Answer.—Job 3:18. There the prisoners (of death) rest together (in the tomb). John 5:28; Psa. 49:14.

6. What Scriptures prove that there is no life beyond the present, apart from a resurrection; also that there is no consciousness in the meantime?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:12-18; Job 7:21; Job 3:17; Job 14:21.

7. What teaching is the basis for Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Mormonism, &c.?

Answer.—The doctrine of inherent immortality. Gen. 3:4.

8. Are there any Scriptural proofs that there is a supernatural power which may operate through mediums?

Answer.—Deut. 18:11, 12; Acts 16:16-18; Acts 8:7.

9. While evil spirits operated through witches in olden days, how did they work in our Lord's day?

Answer.—Matt. 4:24; Matt. 8:16, 28.

10. What is the character of these spirits?

Answer.—Evil. Matt. 8:28. Disobedient. 1 Pet. 3:20.

11. How do they act now, and what is their limitation?

Answer.—Only through mediums.

12. Do the Scriptures forbid any such communication

Answer.—Deut. 18:22; Isa. 8:19.

13. What Scriptures give account of the doings of these spirits and prove their intelligence and recognition of Christ and Paul?

Answer.—Matt. 8:29; Acts 16:17.

14. How is the Christian guarded against these deceptions?

Answer.—Psa. 91; Isa. 8:20; Psa. 119:105.

15. How did Christ preach to the spirits in prison?

Answer.—By His obedience and loyalty to God, by His life and death, that is, by example.

16. Are the saints also to preach to them in the same way?

Answer.—1 Cor. 4:9.

STUDY IX.

WORDS OF LIFE AND COMFORT.

Loved Ones to be Restored.

The Lord through the prophet Jeremiah sends a message of consolation for the heart of every bereaved parent trusting in Him. We read, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children because they were not. Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."—Jeremiah 31: 15-17.

Five items in our text fasten our attention.

First. Sorrow for the dead, which is universal; as the apostle declares, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together."

Second. The nature of the comfort described—the hope of a resurrection, the hope of the recovery of the dead—"They shall come again," they shall be restored to life.

Third. That in death our dear ones are in "the land of the enemy" in harmony with the apostle's declaration, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—1 Cor. 15:26.

Fourth. That the labours of the parents in endeavouring to properly rear their children are not lost, "Their work shall be rewarded."

Fifth. Last but not least in importance in this text is the declaration that this is the Word of the Lord, which cannot be broken—the Word which is sure of fulfilment, however different it may be from the word of man on this subject.

Sorrow for the dead is not a sign of weakness, but rather the reverse—a sign of love and sympathy, of something more than selfishness. If any demonstration of this thought were necessary it is furnished us in the statement of the shortest verse in the Bible—"Jesus wept." Our Lord's tears were shed on a funeral occasion, too; Lazarus, his friend, the brother of Martha and Mary, was dead. Our Lord entered fully into the spirit of the occasion, with a deeper appreciation of the awful meaning of the word death than could possibly be entertained by those about Him. He appreciated more than any of the fallen, dying race the great blessing and privilege of living, and what a terrible affliction was death—destruction, annihilation.

On the other hand, however, He understood more clearly than any of His hearers the gracious plan of God for the rescue of the race from annihilation. He realised that for this purpose He had come into the world, that He might give His life as the ransom price of father Adam, and thus incidentally for every member of the Adamic race involved in death through the first transgression in Eden. The Master realised from the standpoint of faith in the Father's plan, and His confident intention to carry out His own part in that plan to lay down His life as our redemption price, that thus resurrection blessings would come to every member of the race.

Let us note carefully the nature of the consolation which our Lord tendered to the sorrowing ones about Him on this occasion. Let us be assured that "He who spake as never man spake" gave the soundest and best comfort. The consolation which He gave was that "Lazarus is not dead, but sleepeth." He neither spake of him nor thought of him as being dead in the sense of annihilation, because He had full confidence in the Divine plan

of redemption and in the resurrection blessings resulting. Hence the interim of death He spoke of as sleep—quiet, restful, waiting sleep.

What a wonderful figure is this, so frequently used throughout the Scriptures by all those who trusted in the Divine plan of a resurrection morning. In the Old Testament Scriptures we read frequently of sleep. Abraham slept with his fathers, so did Isaac, so did Jacob, so did all the prophets, so did all Israel.

In the New Testament it is same. Not only did our Lord speak of Lazarus sleeping, but the apostles frequently used this same figure of sleep to represent their hope in a resurrection—that the dear ones who went down into death were not annihilated, but, as our text declares, “Will come again from the land of the enemy”—will awaken in the resurrection morning.

Thus, too, of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, it is written that though stoned to death, he “fell asleep,” sweetly, restfully, trusting in Jesus and the great power which He ultimately would exercise to call forth from the power of death all redeemed by the precious blood. This, too, we remember, was the comfort the apostle set before the early Church, saying, “Comfort one another with these words”—“They that sleep in Jesus shall God bring from the dead by him”—(1 Thess. 4:14-18.) Referring to the matter on one occasion, the apostle remarked, “We shall not all sleep, but we must all be changed.” He referred to those who would be living at the second coming of Christ whose resurrection “change” will not be preceded by a period of unconsciousness in death.

Let us go back to Jesus and the sorrowing sisters at Bethany, and hearken to the words of comfort extended to the bereaved on that occasion. We cannot improve upon the great Teacher and the

lessons which He presented. Let us hearken to His conversation with Martha. He says: "Thy brother shall live again." He does not say thy brother is living now. He did not say, as some erroneously teach to-day, thy brother is more alive in death than he was before he died. No! No! The Lord would not thus mock the commonsense and reasons of His hearers, nor could He thus violate the truth and declare the dead not dead.

Hearken! The Lord admits that a calamity has befallen the household. He says not a word about His friend Lazarus having gone to heaven—not an intimation of the sort. On the contrary, He has tears of sympathy, and holds out as the strongest and only truthful solution of the sorrow, the hope of a resurrection—"Thy brother shall live again." "I am the resurrection and the life!" The hope of all the dead centres in Me. My death will effect the cancellation of the original Adamic condemnation, and I shall have the right then in harmony with the Father's plan to call forth all the dead from the great prison-house of death, from the tomb. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth."—John 5:28.

At the close of His conversation with Martha, explaining that her hope must centre in a resurrection of the dead and that He was the centre of that resurrection hope, our Lord asked for the tomb, intent upon giving an illustration of the power which by and by in the resurrection morning will be exercised toward the whole world of mankind. Standing at the door of the tomb our Lord cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" and the dead came forth—he had been dead, he was quickened by our Lord's power and authority.

This, like other miracles performed by our dear

Redeemer at His first advent, we are particularly told, was a fore-manifestation of His coming glory and power, an advance exhibit of what He will do at His second advent, only that the work at the second advent will be universal, higher, deeper, broader every way. "All the blind eyes shall be open and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped;" all that are in their graves shall come forth, not merely to relapse again into blindness and death, but a permanent recovery—not only recovery from the loss of natural sight and hearing, but the eyes and ears of their understanding will be opened also; not merely aroused from a sleep of death to a few years more under present conditions, but aroused to the intent that by obedience to the Divine arrangement of the millennial age all the awakened ones may attain to all the glorious perfections, mental, moral and physical, lost by Adam's disobedience.

Glorious hope of a glorious time. What wonder that the apostle speaks of it as "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord when He shall send Jesus Christ." What wonder that he speaks of those years of the Millennial age as "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:19-21.

Lazarus died again, Jairus' daughter died again, the son of the widow of Nain died again. Their awakening from the tomb was merely a temporary matter, merely an illustration of the Lord's power; as it is written, "These things did Jesus and manifested forth his glory." These were merely foregleams of the coming power and glory and blessed work of the precious Prophet, Priest and King whom God has appointed not only to redeem the world, but in due time to grant to all the opportunities secured by that redemption sacrifice.

The great blessing which will ultimately be for the world of mankind, as well as for the Church, centres in the coming of our Lord and Master, our Redeemer and King, and that the great blessings centering in Him are not merely temporary, but designed of God to be everlasting and eternal to those who accept Divine favours in the right spirit, reverently, thankfully, obediently.

Why should death be called "The land of the enemy"? Why should it be written, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"? All because, disguise the facts as we may, death is an enemy. The suggestion that it is a friend comes not from the Word of God, but from heathen philosophies. The suggestion that it is unreal comes not from the Scriptures, but from heathendom. The suggestion that the dead are more alive than they were before they died is totally out of harmony with the Scriptural declaration—"The dead know not anything; their sons come to honour and they know it not, and to dishonour and they perceive it not of them," because "there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in the grave whither thou goest." (Job 14:21; Eccl. 9:10.) The suggestion that we deceive ourselves and imagine without reason that the moment of death is the moment of greater life, is of the adversary, who contradicted the Lord's statement in Eden to our first parents, and when the Lord had declared, "Ye shall surely die" for your sin, declared in contradiction, "Ye shall not surely die."—Gen. 3:2-4.

The adversary has kept up this false teaching for 6,000 years, and at last not only heathendom is deceived by his misrepresentation of facts, but very many of Christendom likewise trust to the word of Satan, and believe that the dead are not dead, and reject the testimony of God's Word that "the wages of sin is death," that "the soul that

sinneth, it shall die," that "death has passed upon all men because all are sinners," and that the hope of the Church as well as the hope for the world lies in the fact that Christ died for our sins and redeemed us from the death sentence, and in the Father's due time is to effect a resurrection of the dead.

Let us comfort our hearts with the true comfort, the substantial comfort of the Word of God—there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth. The thousands of millions who have gone down into the great prison-house of death shall be released, because the Great Redeemer has the key, the power, the authority, to bid the prisoners come forth, even as the Scriptures declare.—Rev. 1:18.

What a glorious resurrection morning that will be! What a glorious reunion! We understand the Scriptural teaching to be that the awakening processes will continue throughout a considerable portion of the millennial age, the thousand-year day of resurrection and restitution. First will come the resurrection of the Church, the "Bride," the "Lamb's Wife," the "Body of Christ." These, as the Scriptures declare, will constitute the first resurrection—not only first in order of time, but first in the sense of chief. In that company will be none except the saints; as it is written, "Blessed and Holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6.) Nevertheless, that will be but a little flock, as the Scriptures declare, including "not many wise, not many great, not many learned, but

chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom.”—1 Cor. 1: 26, 27; Jas. 3:5.

Not long after the first resurrection (the glorification of the Church), will come the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies—the overcomers of olden times prior to the Gospel age. The assurance is that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the holy prophets—yes, all who were approved to God by their faith and their efforts to obedience—will come forth from the tomb to human conditions, glorious, grand, earthly illustrations of the heavenly Creator, to constitute the earthly representatives of the kingdom, the instructors of mankind.

The instruction of the world will forthwith proceed. We are assured that “the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep”—to such an extent that “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord. for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.’” We cannot stop to describe that glorious time and the grand opportunities it will give to every creature to know the Lord, to obey Him, to attain to resurrection in its full significance—a raising up to mental, moral, and physical perfection.

The Last First, The First Last.

After the Kingdom of God shall have been fully established in the earth and Satan shall have been bound, after the darkness shall have rolled away, and the true light shall have lightened every creature, the time will come for the awakening of all the families of the earth—not all at once, but gradually, “they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” The Scriptures do not go into details on this subject, they leave much to faith, but give us a firm foundation for that faith, nevertheless, in the positive promise of the Lord’s Word.

To our understanding, those who have fallen asleep last, will be among the first to be called back from the land of the enemy, to be awakened and thus the work of awakening the sleeping ones will progress backward, as we might express it! the living ones will prepare for their brothers and sisters and parents, and they in turn for their brothers and sisters and parents, and so on all the way back, until finally father Adam and mother Eve shall come forth to see the world filled with their progeny, in accord with the Lord's original commission that they multiply and fill the earth.

They will behold with astonishment the showers of blessing that have come upon the race from the heavenly Father and through the heavenly Saviour; they will see what havoc was wrought by their disobedience, but that God in His wisdom and power, was both able and willing to overrule the matter and to bring order out of confusion and resurrection out of death. They and all will realise something of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, the grand plan of salvation shall hold up before them. They will see how Abel, their son, who suffered for righteousness was a type and picture of the great Son of God who suffered for righteousness and for our deliverance, and they will see how His blood speaks peace for all for whom it is shed. speaks forgiveness and renewed harmony with God.

They will learn, too, of the terrible degradation which came upon their race subsequently to their death; they will read with appalled hearts and bated breath of the terrible famines and pestilences which came upon the race as a part of the original sentence or death curse; they will learn about the mental aberration which afflicted the world, so that men thought they were doing God service in persecuting one another because of religious dif-

ferences of opinion, and how others, more or less consumed with selfishness, land hunger, etc., warred against each other, and killed one another by the thousands in battle. They will wonder at the patience of God in so long permitting the evil.

Then truly they will see what God has wrought: First, His justice, which provided the great redemption price and would not otherwise clear the guilty. Second, His love, manifested in the same connection, in the giving of His Son. Third, they will come to understand how that during this Gospel age God has been selecting His Church to be the Bride of Christ and joint-heir with Him in the kingdom. Fourth, they will perceive that when this election was complete and the members of the glorified company had all been tried and polished and tested and glorified, then the blessing of the world through the glorified Christ, Head and Body, came upon all mankind in the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:21.

Finally, consider the Lord's Word to us all as a race, and particularly His word to parents: "Thy work shall be rewarded." What a blessing and comfort! What a consolation and encouragement are in these words, to those parents who, seeking to train up their children in the way they should go, are sadly wounded and discouraged when the arrow of death smites down the dear ones they had so loved and cherished. They are disposed at first to say, Ah, my love, my counsel, my motherly care, my fatherly provision, were wasted. But not so, saith the Lord; thy works shall be rewarded.

You shall see the fruit of your labour in the future; we shall know as we are known by and by. Our dear ones will be with us, and to whatever extent time and effort will have been expended upon them to mould and fashion them along the

lines of righteousness and truth, uprightness and godliness, these surely have not been spent in vain. The child shall come forth that much more advanced in its mental and moral development: to that much more easy attainment of the grand heights which the Lord will then open up before it.

On the other hand, the parent who has been careless of his children, neglectful of his privileges and obligations as a parent, will realise his loss in the future as he shall see what he might have done for his children but did not.

And more than this, by a Divine law of reaction, every parent who is faithful in the discharge of his parental duties shall have his work rewarded in himself, and likewise every parent neglectful of his duties shall realise his loss. For who does not realise that there is no greater privilege or opportunity for self-development than comes to the parent in his endeavour to train up his children in the way they should go, in the reverence and admonition of the Lord.

Undoubtedly it is true, too, that every effort to do good unto others, especially to your own children, has its compensating blessings upon your own hearts. May this blessing deepen as the years go on.

In conclusion, "Comfort one another with these words" of our Lord to the effect that your loved ones shall come again from "the land of the enemy", and that their return shall be even much more blessed, under much more favourable conditions than at present. Then, the great King reigning, all evil will be in subjection, all evil doers will be under restraint, all the influences of righteousness will be in operation, and the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep. Blessed prospects are those

before us, and to Him Who loved us and bought us, and to the heavenly Father, who designed the great plan, we give everlasting thanks and praises.

Berean Questions.

1. Is it natural for man to die, or is death an enemy?
Answer.—An enemy. 1 Cor. 15:26.
2. What does the apostle mean by saying, "We shall not all sleep, but we must all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52)? Is it that some will not die?
Answer.—Rev. 2:10. All who will be joint heirs with Christ must die.—Rom. 6:3, 5; Psa. 116:15; Psa. 82:6, 7.
3. Why is Jesus called "The Resurrection and the Life"?
Answer.—John 6:40; John 17:2; John 5:26, 27.
4. What did the Lord's miracles foreshadow?
Answer.—The work of the Messianic age. John 2:11.
5. What Scriptures indicate the Lord's work for mankind in the resurrection day
Answer.—Isa. 25:6-9; Isa. 29:18; Isa. 35:3-7; Isa. 65:21-25.
6. Were Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and others resurrected?
Answer.—No; they were simply brought back to the same condition and died again, to await the resurrection. 2 Tim. 2:18.
7. Who are the just and the unjust in Acts 24:15?
Answer.—Heb. 11; Rom. 5:1; Matt. 11:24; Ezek. 16:55; John 5:29. (R.V.)
8. Why are the unjust resurrected?
Answer.—1 Tim. 2:4; Ezek. 16:51-63.
9. Who will take part in the first resurrection?
Answer.—Rev. 20:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Eph. 1:4, 5.
10. How is the reward of the Church compared with the reward of the Ancient Worthies?
Answer.—Heb. 11:40.
11. Will there be room on the earth for all the millions who are awaiting the resurrection
Answer.—It has been computed on a broad basis that when the whole earth has been made habitable there will be room for all who have ever lived.
12. How will Satan be bound?
Answer.—Matt. 12:26-19; Rev. 20:2. Compare Mal. 3:15 with Psa. 72:7.
13. Will it be as hard to do right "in that day" as it is now?
Answer.—Psa. 92:12, 13; Isa. 35:8-10; Isa. 62:10; Isa. 60:18-21; Isa. 42:3, 4.



RESURRECTIO LAZARUS

STUDY X.

THE RESURRECTION.

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, . . . then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: . . . then is not Christ raised, and ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."—1 Cor. 15:13-18.

When we remember that the word "resurrection" is used no less than thirty-seven times in the New Testament, besides various other words of similar import; and when we remember that all the prominent creeds of Christendom declare faith in a resurrection as an integral and essential part of Scriptural doctrine and of the hope of eternal life—in view of these facts, and of the strong language of the texts above quoted, whose inspiration is conceded by all Christians, it may seem strange that we should ask any Christian the question, Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?

Nevertheless, we have serious reason to doubt that a belief in the resurrection of the dead prevails amongst Christians to any considerable extent; and it is because we believe the resurrection to be a very important doctrine in its connection with other doctrines of Scripture (throwing light upon other doctrines), that we desire to call general attention to this subject and to invite an examination of our question in the light of facts and of Scripture; our hope being that after a careful examination of the subject many more of God's people will come to believe—consistently, logically, Scripturally—in a resurrection.

True, it is customary on every funeral occasion to read the words of the apostle Paul, in which he sets forth the resurrection as the Christian's hope (1 Cor. 15), but this seems to be a mere concession on the part of the officiating minister. He feels it to be his duty to read something on the subject,

but his remarks following the reading prove most conclusively that, so far from believing that the person whose corpse is about to be buried is dead, he believes, and instructs his hearers that they should believe that their friend and neighbour is "more alive than he ever was." Frequently, indeed, he plays directly into the hands of the "Spiritualists," and "Christian Scientists," by telling the audience that the spirit of the dead friend is with them in the room, hovering over them; and that if permitted to speak he would say to them, "Dry your tears; weep not for me; I am far better off in glory."

Indeed, it has come to be the general belief among Christian people that death is a delusion, and not a reality: that people merely seem to die, and do not die; that they merely experience a change to a higher form of being; that so-called "Christian Scientists" are quite correct in saying, "There is no death."

Whoever holds such views does not, cannot consistently believe in "the resurrection of the dead"; because if no one is dead, how can there be a resurrection of the dead? Wherein would be the sense in speaking of a resurrection of the dead to life, if they already have life more abundantly than they possessed it before they seemingly died?

But thousands of ministers would answer us, saying, "When speaking of the resurrection, we merely mean a resurrection of the body—the bodies which we bury are all to come forth again from the grave, and the spirits which parted from them in death are to be rehabilitated in those bodies in the resurrection. This is what we mean by resurrection."

Well, well! Who would have supposed such inconsistency on the part of so many learned and well-meaning men!

(1) They tell us that the deceased is "far better off," in that he has gotten free from the "fetters of the flesh," and that now "his free spirit wings its flight to God, no longer hampered and hindered by the mortal dust." They go into ecstasies in describing the grandeur and liberty and blessedness of the one who has died, and who, by reason of getting rid of the body, has attained to a life more abundant, knowledge a hundredfold, and blessings indescribable.

(2) In the same breath they quote the Scriptures referring to the resurrection and (wholly misconstruing those Scriptures) tell us that by and by, at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same bodies of flesh that were buried will be reorganised. (Dr. Talmage, in his famous resurrection sermon, pictured the resurrection morning, and the entire sky darkened with the fragments of human bodies coming together from various parts of the earth, where a finger, a foot, or a hand has been lost by accident, disease or amputation.) They tell us that then the spirit beings, which, they say, left those bodies at death, will return to them as their everlasting habitations. Then, inasmuch as the resurrection is Scripturally set forth to be the grand and glorious result and consummation of our salvation, they feel compelled to go into ecstasies, over their erroneous presentation of the resurrection, and to tell how glorious and grand will be the result.

They seem to overlook entirely the inconsistency of these two propositions; and they expect that their hearers will be similarly inconsistent and illogical; yea, many of them seem to think that the more inconsistent and unreasonable their belief may be, the more reason they have to congratulate themselves that they have a very strong faith. However, the real fact is that they have a very

strong credulity. But they will have no reward for believing unreasonable things which God's Word has not taught, but has contradicted.

Who cannot see, if he will, that the man who dies at fifty years old, if in dying he obtains life more abundant and knowledge a hundredfold, and a freedom to "wing flight," etc., would be sadly disappointed by a resurrection—if it should mean to him reimprisonment in a tenement of clay, with physical restrictions and human limitations? And then, if he had thus for centuries been a "free spirit, roaming at liberty throughout the universe, untrammelled by a body and bodily limitations, where would be the consistency on God's part of reimprisoning such an one in a human body? And if to be without a body is "perfect bliss," as the funeral orators tell, how could there be anything added to perfect bliss by a resurrection of the body, and reincarnation therein?

With this preface to our subject we go to the Scriptures to learn from them what is meant by "the resurrection of the dead," and in what manner and why the Scriptures speak of the resurrection as the hope, the only hope, the blessed hope, not only of the Lord's people, who are to have part in the "first resurrection," but of the world in general, who are to have an opportunity to share in the resurrection of judgment, improperly translated, "the resurrection of damnation."—John 5:29.

Whoever would believe the Scriptural doctrine of the resurrection must also believe the Scriptural doctrine respecting death—that death is death, the cessation of life. Then, and not until then, will he be able to understand the apostle's words in our text, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, . . . then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

Nor is this statement by the great apostle Paul an exception to or different from the teaching of the Scriptures elsewhere. Their unanimous testimony is that the dead are dead; that "in that very day their thoughts perish." (Psa. 146:4.) Of the dead the Scriptures further declare, "His sons come to honour and he knoweth it not; to dishonour, and he perceiveth it not of them;" "for there is neither wisdom nor knowledge, nor device in the grave whither thou goest." Job 14:21; Eccl. 9:10.

Here is a direct conflict between modern teachers and the inspired Word, the Scriptures claiming that the dead know not anything, the modern theologians claiming that they know everything.

The entire plan of salvation is connected with this question. If death was not the penalty of sin, incurred through Adam, then "life and that more abundant" is not the reward and blessing of God secured through Christ by a resurrection. Satan's proposition, which has been so widely accepted by the Lord's people, and which exercises so blinding an influence upon their minds, is the reversal, in every sense of the word, of the Divine proposition that death is the curse or penalty of sin; that Christ died to release man from this sentence or curse, and that the release comes by the resurrection of the dead, who otherwise would never have future life, as says the apostle in our text. Satan's theory declares death a blessing which brings the fulness of life and liberty and joy, and would make of the resurrection a curse, bringing imprisonment and difficulty and restriction.

No wonder that, blinded by this deception of the adversary, the majority of the great theologians are leaving the doctrine of the atonement, which declares that "as by a man (Adam) came death, so also by a man (the man Christ Jesus) comes the resurrection of the dead; that as all in Adam die,

even so all in Christ shall be made alive.”—1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

If the reality of death is denied, it is no more difficult to deny the reality of sin. If it is claimed that father Adam was not created in the image and likeness of God, but was created a very close image and likeness of the monkey, it follows that in that low condition of intelligence he was unfit for trial for eternal life; and it is only a further step to deny that he ever had a trial, and that he ever failed and fell from grace. And if the fall is denied, and, instead, the claim is put forward that man has really been advancing even to the present time, losing his likeness to the monkey and gaining in likeness to God, then it will be consistent also to take the next step, and declare that since man did not fall he did not need to be redeemed from the fall.

And hence, with all such reasoning upon unscriptural basis, it appears logical to deny the oft-repeated declaration of God's Word, that our Lord Jesus is our Redeemer, and that “He is the propitiation for our sins (the Church's sins), and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,” giving for us, as our ransom or corresponding price, His own life, that He might buy back the forfeited life of Adam.

The apostle of old “preached Jesus and the resurrection”—Jesus as the Redeemer of mankind from sin and its curse—death—and the resurrection as the grand result of that redemptive work, by which the blessings secured by the ransom-sacrifice will be made applicable to and available for whosoever wills.

The testimony of our senses, like the testimony of God's Word, is that death means the loss of life, and not an increase of life. Watch the dying one and note his weakening powers, mental and physical, until the spark of life becomes extinct.

You have seen nothing go from him, you have heard nothing but the death-rattle; you have felt the gradual cessation of the pulse, and noted the gasping for breath; and all of your senses which you can exercise upon the subject tell you that your friend, your loved one, is dead—alive no longer. You look about you and study the subject and inquire of others, "What next?" The answer to your senses is, "the next thing is corruption; when the spark of life has gone the corpse must be buried; 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes.'" You note the similarity between the death of your friend and loved one and the death of the brute beast, and your senses can discern no difference between them; and the Scriptures declare, "As dieth the one, so dieth the other; they have all one [spirit of life] breath."—Eccl. 3:19.

But with a longing for a future life, implanted in our nature by our Creator, we inquire: Is there no hope; hath a man no pre-eminence above a beast? The Scriptures answer your question, assuring us that, physically speaking, man "hath no pre-eminence above a beast." But the Scriptures assure us that although mankind is not possessed of any power of life beyond that of the beast, the Creator has, nevertheless, made a provision for man that He did not make for the beast; and that provision is the very thing for which we long, namely, everlasting life. The Scriptures point out to us that this provision for man's everlasting life was made by the Lord in the beginning—not by implanting a deathless quality in the man's constitution, but by providing in the life-sustaining trees of the Garden of Eden, the means of continuing his life everlastingly; nevertheless, the provision was conditional, dependent upon man's obedience to his Creator.

The Scriptures point out that man's disobedience

brought upon him the sentence of death, and that the execution of that sentence was effected by driving him out of the garden and away from the life sustaining fruit of its trees. Thus driven out, the sentence, "Dying, thou shalt die," took effect upon father Adam gradually, and he lived out nearly to the end of the first thousand-year day. His posterity, becoming weaker and weaker as generations rolled by, are to-day (notwithstanding the many advancements in science, and medicine and sanitary arrangements), reduced to an average of about thirty-five years—"and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow," and they are soon "cut off from the land of the living," to go into "the land of the enemy"—into the great prison-house of death, in which it is estimated that over twenty thousand millions of our race are already—"where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.—Job 3:17-19.

The Scriptures answer our inquiries respecting the dead. While assuring us of the justice of the Divine sentence of death, they nevertheless declare that our Creator is a God of mercy and of pity, and that when there was no eye to pity and no arm to deliver us, His Arm brought salvation to us. The Scriptures, moreover, point out to us the Lord Jesus Christ as the Arm of Jehovah, stretched down for our relief from sin and sickness and pain and trouble, and for our deliverance from the prison-house of death, and for our restoration to the liberties and privileges of the sons of God.

It was in harmony with this Divine sympathy that, in due time, God sent His only begotten Son into the world for our redemption—to give for us the ransom-price, and ultimately to recover all who will accept of Divine mercy, from all the consequences of the fall by a resurrection from the dead.

But Divine love could not make void Divine justice; it was necessary that God should be just, if He would be the justifier of them that believed in Jesus; hence the demands of justice—the penalty for sin—must be paid by our Redeemer, before the work of release and restitution could begin. And here we have the best of evidence respecting what is the penalty of sin, and what is not; because, since our Lord Jesus pays for us the just penalty of sin, what He laid down for us will prove what was the penalty against us. What did He do for us? The Scriptures answer: He laid down His life for us; "He died for our sins;" "He died the just for the unjust;" "He poured out his soul unto death;" He "made his soul an offering for [our] sin," and "by his stripes we are healed."—Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:18; Isa. 53:4, 6, 10.

Nothing is more evident than that our Lord Jesus did not suffer an eternity of torment as the price of our redemption; and hence, if the matter needed proof we have here the proof that eternal torment was not the penalty for our sins. On the contrary, the fact that our Lord Jesus died for our sins, and that the heavenly Father accepted of that sacrifice of His life on our behalf, proves that it was our lives that were forfeited by sin: that the full penalty of the Divine law against us as a race was the deprivation of life. The whole race, under sentence of death, has gone down to the great prison-house of death—the grave, sheol, hades. And so our dear Redeemer, when He gave up His life for us, went also to sheol, hades, the grave. He took our place, and suffered for us the penalty for our sins.

But as Jesus' death ransoms man from the sentence of death, so His resurrection from death became the assurance of the justification of all who accept and obey Him. The heavenly Father gave

evidence that the ransom price was entirely satisfactory; and our Lord, who was thus obedient to the Father, was raised from the dead and, as the Father's agent and representative, will soon begin the work of blessing the entire world redeemed by His precious blood.

The Prison-House of Death to be Opened and the Prisoners Set Free.

The blessing of the world means the breaking open of the prison-house and the setting at liberty of the captives, who for six thousand years have been going into the prison-house of death. For this reason our Lord is called the Life-giver, because His great work will be to give back life to the world of mankind, who lost life in Adam. And since the restoration of life to mankind will mean the removal of pains and sickness and troubles, which are a part of the dying process, our Redeemer is styled the Great Physician.

The prophecy which mentions the breaking open the prison-house of death, and the setting at liberty of its captives (Isaiah 42:7), was applied and unquestionably correctly, by our Lord to Himself; but He did not break open the prison-house of death, and set all the captives free by resurrection immediately upon His own resurrection. He tells us when this work will be done, saying (John 5:25-29) "The hour cometh in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth"; "and they that hear (obey his voice then, Acts 3:22) shall live."

Our Lord thus passed over the interim of the Gospel age, and pointed to the grand consummation of His work in the incoming age because such was the Father's prearranged plan. "The Father sent the Son," and the Son willingly undertook the work of redemption, at a time sufficiently in advance of the "times of restitution," or resurrection,

and the general blessing of the world during the reign of Messiah, to leave the interim of this Gospel age for another work, namely, for selecting from the world a "little flock," a "royal priesthood," a "peculiar people," a "holy nation," to be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus their Lord in the honours of the mediatorial kingdom. These shall be associated with the Redeemer in the grand and glorious work of destroying the Prince of Darkness and breaking open the prison-house of death, and setting at liberty the captives of sin and ignorance and superstition; and in fulfilling generally all the provisions of the gracious promises of God made to father Abraham that in his seed (Christ, and His elect Body, the Church), "all the families of the earth shall be blessed."—Gal. 3:8, 16, 29.

This brings us to the Scriptural proposition, that there is a first, a chief or special resurrection, and a general one later. The first or superior resurrection includes the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the entire elect "Church which is His Body"—no more, no less. "Blessed and holy are all they that have part in the first resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power, but they shall be kings and priests unto God and shall reign on the earth"—the Messianic kingdom class. Those who will share in this first resurrection will be "changed" from the human nature to the Divine nature—the highest of the spirit natures; not human, not flesh and blood, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God."* Their trial and perfecting of heart takes

*Some are confused by this expression "flesh and blood"; they fail to see that it signifies human nature; we therefore invite such to examine the use of the same phrase elsewhere, by the same New Testament writers. In so doing, they will be convinced that our definition, human nature, is the correct one, the Scriptural one. See the following uses of the phrase: Matt. 16:17; John 3:5, 6; 1 Cor. 15:50.

place beforehand, and only the "overcomers" will receive the blessings. Some of the characteristics of their change are indicated by the apostle as a change from weakness to power, from dishonour to glory, from corruption to incorruption, from a natural (human) body to a spirit body.

The time for this best, or chief resurrection, is everywhere in Scripture indicated to be at the close of the Gospel age, at a time when the entire Gospel Church will be completed. This includes the living members, whose "change" to spirit nature will be instantaneous, so that the moment of their dying as human beings will be the moment of their "change" to perfect spirit beings. Meantime, the Scriptures declare that the Lord's people who have died, like the rest of mankind, are really dead, as human beings, and know not anything; but inasmuch as God has provided for their resurrection, and inasmuch as they have been informed respecting it, and have hopes therein, therefore they are spoken of as being merely asleep—resting from their labours; waiting for "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only," as the apostle declares.

And, likewise the world of mankind, even though they know not of the Lord as yet, are spoken of as being "asleep in Jesus," because, as the whole world was under condemnation of death through Adam, and that without knowledge or volition on their part, at the time of the sentence, for they were then in the loins of their father, Adam, so now, since Jesus laid down His life a ransom for all, and because they all shall be awakened from death, therefore it is proper for all those who are aware of the Divine provision for the awakening, by faith to speak of the interim figuratively as a sleep.

Thus the apostle exhorts us to trust and hope in the resurrection as respects all our dear friends who go down into the prison-house of death, and not merely as respects those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus, which would include, as a rule, only a small proportion of those for whom we would be inclined to sorrow. He says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (all our sleeping friends), that ye sorrow not even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died (a ransom for all) and rose again (that He might be Lord and Life-giver to all) even so (let us believe as truly that) those also which sleep in Jesus (all whom He purchased with His precious blood) will God bring by Him (from the prison-house of death)."

But as the first resurrection is the resurrection of the blessed and holy, of the sanctified in Christ Jesus, His Body, so the general resurrection, which is for the world, is designated as "a resurrection of Judgment," mistranslated in our common version "resurrection of damnation." It is styled a "resurrection of judgment" because, while all the preparation has been made, so far as God is concerned, for granting to the world of mankind a full resurrection or restitution back to all that was first given to Adam, and lost by his disobedience, to be recovered by our Saviour's precious blood, yet there are certain conditions attached to this blessing upon which it depends, namely, the conditions of the New Covenant.

God does not propose to give eternal life through Christ to any others than those who earnestly desire it, and who are in heart sympathy with the principles of righteousness which must always be the law of the Divine government. Hence when the world is awakened from the sleep of death, it will not signify resurrection, but much less; for resur-

rection, in its full, complete Scriptural sense, signifies a complete raising up, out of sin and out of death, to perfection of being perfection of life.

The first work of Christ and the Church in the world, for those who have gone down into death, the prison, will be their awakening to physical conditions, similar to those in which they died. The surrounding conditions of society will then be greatly improved; knowledge will have taken the place of ignorance, and the reign of righteousness and the law of love will at that time have superseded the rule of sin under the law of selfishness; and Satan will be bound, that he shall deceive the nations no more for the thousand years. Under the favourable conditions of that mediatorial kingdom, all mankind will be required to make progress in the knowledge of the Lord and in the bringing of their own hearts and lives in accordance with His law of love. Whosoever then will make no effort in the right direction will be cut off from life, in the second death, after one hundred years of trial (Isa. 65:20), although he would then, under the changed conditions, be properly reckoned as only a lad.

But while judgment will thus pass against one who fails to make progress, and will cut short his further opportunity, the same judgment, by the same Judge, will operate favourably to all who will seek righteousness, and make progress in harmony with the laws of the Kingdom; so that year by year they will be growing mentally, physically and morally stronger—approximating gradually the full, complete standard of perfect manhood, the image and likeness of the Creator, as first represented in father Adam. Thus the resurrection, so far as the world is concerned, will be a gradual work; its first step an awakening from the sleep of unconsciousness and nonentity: its succeeding

steps will be along the lines of judgment, the conduct of those who are on trial being either approved or disapproved; and culminating either in their sentence to the second death, incorrigible, and unworthy of the gift of God, eternal life—or in their perfection, and their final adjudgment of worthiness to have and enjoy the great boon of life eternal, under the blessed conditions which are then promised to prevail—when there shall be no more sighing, no more dying, no more crying, because there will be no more sin, and none of the penalties for sin, for all the former things have passed away.—Rev. 21:4.

The condition of all the dead, up to the time when the resurrection work begins, is one of total unconsciousness: "There is neither wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave whither thou goest,"; "His sons come to honour and he knoweth it not, to dishonour, and he perceiveth it not of them." Of each of the patriarchs of the past it is written, "He slept with his fathers"; "He fell asleep." And so also in the New Testament we have a similar record: "Stephen fell asleep." The apostle Paul speaks of those who saw the Lord after His resurrection and says, "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to this present time, but some are fallen asleep." Again he speaks of some which are "fallen asleep in Christ," here distinguishing between the Church, who are in Christ,* as members of his body, and the world of mankind in general, who "sleep in Jesus."—1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:6, 18; 1 Thess. 4:14.

The apostle shows that this sleep-condition will prevail, even as respects the Church, until the time

*Christ is the title of our Lord as the New Creature, and of His office; while Jesus is the name of the Redeemer, through whose sacrifice comes to all men an opportunity to share in the resurrection of the dead.

of the second coming of Christ, assuring us that the living members of the Church at the time of the Lord's second advent will not be blessed prior to those that have fallen asleep, but contrariwise, the living "shall not prevent (hinder) them that are asleep," for the dead in Christ shall arise first; then we who are alive and remain will be blessed, and ultimately experience our "change."

The moment of reawakening will seem to the awakened ones to be the next moment after their death—"for there is neither wisdom, knowledge nor device in the grave." The bodies in which the world will be awakened will be practically the same as those which died, though not the same atoms of matter; for in the hands of our Creator one atom of dust is as good as another in this great work. Thus the apostle says, "Thou sowest not that body which shall be." The bodies of the world, as they shall be when awakened, will be really new bodies in the sense that they will be different atoms of matter; but they will be old bodies, in the sense that they will be duplicates of those which died and went to dust. We cannot wonder that the worldly mind, which knows not God and knows not His power, cavil at the thought of resurrection. It will be a most stupendous work, more wonderful by far than man's original creation; it will thus be to the world of mankind, and to the angels of heaven also, the grandest exhibition ever given of Divine omnipotence.

He who formed man in the beginning, in His own image, has the power not only to form him again of the dust of the ground, and to re-ignite the spark of life, but yet more than in these will He exhibit both His omnipotence and His infinite wisdom in the restoration to each being of a brain like his present one, having recorded therein the events and circumstances which have transpired

in the present life—just as the wax cylinder of a phonograph bears in itself the recorded words of the speaker, which can be reproduced at another time and place. None but an Infinite Being could claim the power thus to reproduce the very thoughts of the billions of mankind. He of whom it is said that He knows the very hairs of our heads and their number, and that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without His notice—only He could do so great and wonderful a thing; and only as we have learned to have confidence in Him through the revelation of His Word could we exercise faith in such a stupendous miracle as He has promised shall be performed.

Nor need we expect that the world of mankind will all be awakened simultaneously, but rather that the great work of the Messianic kingdom will begin with those who have not gone down to the tomb, but who are nevertheless in death, in the sense that they are not alive in the complete, full measure of freedom from the power of death. When the work of restitution shall have progressed to some extent with these, we may expect that some of those who have previously fallen asleep in death will be awakened, and share in the blessings of that glorious day. Later, others, and still others will arise, until eventually it will be true that, in that day, the day of Christ, "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man"—shall obey the mandate, "Come forth"—and shall be brought to a knowledge of the goodness and love and mercy of God; and, if they will, ultimately to the full perfection of human nature—the earth, meanwhile, being fitted and prepared as a Paradise of God for His restored family.

Meantime, the exhortation to all the "called" in the present age is that we should seek to make our "calling and election sure" to a place in the king-

dom class, to a change of nature, from human to divine, and thus have a right, under the Divine arrangement, to have a part in the "first resurrection"—the chief resurrection, the resurrection to the perfection of the Divine nature with its glory and its honour.

Berean Questions.

1. What does the word "resurrection" mean?

Answer.—A re-standing; a restoring to a position previously occupied. 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

2. Does the Bible teach that there is to be a resurrection of the body?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:35-38.

3. How do we know that without a resurrection there would be no life hereafter?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:13-18; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 9:10; Psa 146:4.

4. If we consider the work of resurrection as still future, how can we explain the Lord's words to the dying thief Luke 23:43.

Answer.—The thief requested to be remembered when the Lord came into His Kingdom, and the Lord replied: "I say unto you to-day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

(The translators placed the comma in the wrong place.) The whole world is to be like Eden—Paradise. Ezek. 36:35.

5. While man has no pre-eminence over the beasts as regards death, in what does his superiority consist?

Answer.—In the possession of mental and moral faculties, by which he is able to appreciate the qualities of God and render Him intelligent worship.

6. What is the basis of the hope in a resurrection?

Answer.—Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Tim. 2:6; Matt. 20:28; Heb. 2:9; Matt. 26:28; John 6:51, 54.

7. If man has been gradually degenerating, how can we account for the advancements in knowledge, &c.?

Answer.—Dan. 12:4.

8. Who is the author of the Plan of Salvation?

Answer.—Isa. 14:24; Acts 15:18; Acts 17:26; Eph. 1:3, 4, 10; Isa. 44:23-28.

9. Why did God allow man to go into the tomb, and then arrange to bring him out?

Answer.—Eph. 1:10; Eph. 3:10, 11; Rom. 11:32-34.

10. How does the doctrine of eternal torture deny the ransom

Answer.—If eternal torture were the penalty for sin then the ransom is not paid, "Christ died for our sins." 1 Cor. 15:3; Isa. 53:5, 10, 12; Rom. 6:23; 1 Pet. 2:24.

11. What Scriptures indicate that Jehovah has left the entire work of resurrection and judgment in the hands of the Son?

Answer.—John 5:21, 22; John 11:25; John 6:39, 40; John 3:35; Matt. 28:18; Acts 17:31.

12. What is meant by the "resurrection by judgment" (John 5:29. R.V.)? Do the judges of Israel illustrate the matter?

Answer.—(a) Punishments for wrong-doing; rewards for obedience. Isa. 26:9; Psa. 72:2-4; Isa. 11:1-5; (b) Yes. Judges 2:16-18.

13. What is the length of the resurrection day?

Answer.—Rev. 20:4; 2 Pet. 3:8; Psa. 90:4

14. What is "the first resurrection"?

Answer.—1 Thess. 4:15-17; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 7:4; Eph. 1:12; James 1:18; Phil. 3:10.

15. Do all the saints sleep in death

Answer.—1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51.

16. What will be the nature of the saints in the resurrection?

Answer.—2 Peter. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 15:44-50; 1 Pet. 1:3-5.

17. Will the attainment of perfect human nature be a gradual matter?

Answer.—Isa. 35:3, 4, 8-10; Jer. 23:3-6; Isa. 29:18-20; Isa. 32: 16, 17.

18. If it was not the body that was sown that will be raised, what will be raised?

Answer.—Acts 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:38.

19. How will we know each other in the resurrection?

Answer.—1 Cor. 13:12. By their characteristics. Luke 24:30, 31; John 20:14-16.

20. When will Jer. 31:34 have its fulfilment?

Answer.—During the thousand year reign of Christ. Acts 3:19-21; Amos 9:11, 12.

STUDY XI.

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY.

"If a man die shall he live again All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."—Job 14:14.

There is a longing hope within men that death does not end all existence. There is an undefined hope that, somehow and somewhere, the life now begun will have a continuation. In some this hope turns to fear. Realising their unworthiness of a future of pleasure, many fear a future of woe; and the more they dread it for themselves and others the more they believe in it.

This undefined hope of a future life and its counterpart, fear, doubtless had their origin in the Lord's condemnation of the serpent after Adam's fall into sin and death, that eventually the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This was no doubt understood to mean that at least a portion of the Adamic family would finally triumph over Satan, and over sin and death, into which he had inveigled them. No doubt God encouraged such a hope, even though but vaguely, speaking to and through Noah, and through Enoch who prophesied, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." But the gospel, "the good tidings" of a salvation from death to be offered to all mankind in God's due time, seems to have been first clearly stated to Abraham. The apostle declares, "The gospel was preached before to Abraham,—saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" This at least was the basis of the Jewish hope of a resurrection; for since many of the families of the earth were dead and dying, the promised blessing of all implied a future

life. And when, centuries after, Israel was scattered among the nations at the time of the Babylonian captivity, they undoubtedly carried fragments of God's promises and their hopes everywhere they went.

Sure it is, that whether it came as a result of an admixture of Jewish thought, or because hope is an elements of man's nature, or both, the whole world believes in a future life, and almost all believe that it will be everlasting. But such hopes are not proofs of the doctrine; and the Old Testament promises, made to the Jews, are too vague to constitute a groundwork for a clear faith, much less for a "dogmatic theology," on this subject.

It is not until we find, in the New Testament, the clear, positive statements of our Lord, and afterwards the equally clear statements of the apostles on this momentous subject of everlasting life that we begin to exchange our vague hopes for positive convictions. In other words, we not only have positive statements to the effect that the possibilities of a future life have been provided for all, but the philosophy of the fact and how it is to be attained and maintained are set forth there as nowhere else.

Many have not noticed these points, and hence are "weak in the faith." Let us see what this philosophy is, and be more assured than ever that future life, everlasting life, is by our great and wise Creator's provision made a possibility for every member of the human family.

Beginning at the foundation of this New Testament assurance of life everlasting, we find to our astonishment that it first of all admonishes us that in and of ourselves we have nothing which would give us any hope of everlasting life; that the life of our race was forfeited by the disobedience of our father Adam, that although he was created perfect and was adapted to live forever, his sin not only

brought to him the wages of sin—death—but that his children were born in a dying condition, inheritors of the dying influences. God's law, like Himself, is perfect, and so was His creature (Adam) before he sinned; for of God it is written, "His work is perfect." And God through His law approves only that which is perfect, and condemns to destruction everything imperfect.

Hence the race of Adam, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," has no hope of everlasting life except upon the conditions held out in the New Testament and called the Gospel—the good tidings, that a way back from the fall, to perfection, to divine favour and everlasting life, has been opened up through Christ, and for all Adam's family who will avail themselves of it.

The key note of this hope of reconciliation to God, and thus to a fresh hope of life everlasting, is laid in the statements (1) that "Christ died for our sins," and (2) that "he rose again for our justification;" for "the man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price] for all." Adam and his race, which when he sinned was yet in him and shared his sentence naturally, "have been redeemed [bought] by the precious blood [death] of Christ."—1 Pet. 1:19.

But, although the Lord's provision is abundant for all, it is not applicable to any extent except on certain conditions; namely (1) that they accept Christ as their Redeemer; and (2) that they strive to avoid sin and to thenceforth live in harmony with God and righteousness. Hence we are told that "Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23.) The following Scripture statements are very clear on this subject:—

"He that hath the Son hath life [a right or privilege or grant of life as God's gift]; but he that

hath not the Son shall not see [perfect] life.”—John 3:36; 1 John 5:12.

None can obtain everlasting life except from Christ the Redeemer and appointed Life-giver; and the truth which brings to us the privilege of manifesting faith and obedience, and thus “laying hold on eternal life,” is called the “water of life” and the “bread of life.”—John 4:14; 6:40, 54.

This everlasting life will be granted only to those who, when they learn of it and the terms upon which it will be granted as a gift, seek for it, by living according to the spirit of holiness. They shall reap it as a gift-reward.—Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:8.

To gain this everlasting life we must become the Lord’s “sheep” and follow the voice, the instructions of the Shepherd.—John 10:26-28; 17:2, 3.

The gift of everlasting life will not be forced upon any. On the contrary, it must be desired and sought and laid hold upon by all who would gain it.—1 Tim. 6:12, 19.

It is thus a hope, rather than the real life, that God gives us now: the hope that we may ultimately attain it, because God has provided a way by which He can be just and yet be the justifier of all truly believing and accepting Christ.

By God’s grace our Lord Jesus not only bought us by the sacrifice of His life for ours, but He became our great High Priest, and as such He is now the “author [source] of eternal salvation to all that obey him.” (Heb. 5:9.) “And this is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.”—1 John 2:25.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life [now by faith and hope, and by and by actually. ‘when he who is our life shall appear’], and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”—1 John 5:11, 12.

This everlasting life, made possible to Adam and all his race, by our Creator through our Redeemer, but intended for, and promised to, only the faithful and obedient, and which at present is given to these only as a hope, will be actually given to the faithful in the "resurrection."

It will be noticed that the explicit promises of God's Word differ widely from the worldly philosophies on this subject. They claim that man must have a future everlasting life because he hopes for it, or in some cases fears it. But hopes and fears are not reasonable grounds for belief on any subject. Neither is there basis for the claim that there is something in man which must live on and on forever; no such part of the human organism is known, or can be proved or located.

But the Scriptural view of the subject is open to no such objections: it is thoroughly reasonable to consider our existence or life, as therein presented, as a "gift of God," and not an inalienable possession of our own. Furthermore, it avoids a great and serious difficulty to which the idea of the heathen philosophies is open; for when the heathen philosopher states that man cannot perish, that he must live forever, that eternal life is not a gift of God, as the Bible declares, but a natural quality possessed by every man, he claims too much. Such a philosophy not only gives everlasting existence to those who would use it well, and to whom it would be a blessing, but to others also, who would not use it well, and to whom it would be a curse. The scripture teaching, on the contrary, as we have already shown, declares that this great and inestimably precious gift (life-everlasting) will be given to those who believe and obey the Redeemer and Life-giver. Others, to whom it would be an injury, not only do not possess it now, but can never get it. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift

of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The wicked (all who, after coming to a clear knowledge of the truth, still wilfully disobey it) shall be cut off from among God's people in the second death. They shall "be as though they had not been." "They shall utterly perish." "Everlasting destruction" shall be their doom—a destruction which will last forever, from which there will be no recovery, no resurrection. They will suffer the loss of everlasting life, and all of its privileges, joys and blessings—the loss of all that the faithful will gain.—Psa. 37:9, 20; Job 10:19; 2 Thess. 1:9.

God's gift of life eternal is precious to all His people, and a firm grasp of it by the hand of faith is quite essential to a well-balanced and consistent life. Only those who have "laid hold on eternal life," by an acceptance of Christ and consecration to His service, are able to properly and profitably combat the tempests of life now raging.

A Distinction and a Difference.

But now, having examined the hope of immortality from the ordinary understanding of that word (everlasting life), and having found that everlasting life is God's provision for all those of Adam's race who will accept it in "due time" under the terms of the New Covenant, we are prepared to go a step further and to point out that everlasting life and immortality are not synonymous terms, as people in general suppose. The word "immortal" means more than power to live everlastingly; and according to the Scriptures, millions may ultimately enjoy everlasting life, but only a very limited "little flock" will be made immortal.

Immortality is an element or quality of the divine nature, but not of human or angelic or any other nature than the divine. And it is because

Christ and His "little flock," His "bride," are to be "partakers of the divine nature" that they will be exceptions to all other creatures either in heaven or on earth.—2 Pet. 1:4.

The word immortal signifies not mortal—death-proof, indestructible, imperishable. Any being whose existence is dependent in any manner upon another, or upon conditions such as food, light, air, etc., is not immortal. This quality inheres in Jehovah God alone, as it is written—"The Father hath life in himself" (John 5:26); i.e., His existence is not a derived one, nor a sustained one. He "only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16) as an innate or original quality of being.* These Scriptures, being decisive authority on the subject, we may know beyond peradventure that men, angels, archangels, or even the Son of God before and during the time He "was made flesh and dwelt among us" were not immortal—all were mortal.

But the word "mortal" does not signify dying, but merely die-able—possessing life dependent upon God for its continuance. For instance, angels, not being immortal, are mortal, and could die, could be destroyed by God if they became rebels against His wise, just, and loving government. In Him [in His providence] they live and move and have their being. Indeed, of Satan, who was such an angel of light, and who did become a rebel, it is distinctly declared that in due time he will be destroyed. (Heb. 2:14:) This not only proves that Satan is mortal, but it proves that angelic nature is a mortal nature—one which could

*This Scripture may be held to apply to our Lord Jesus Christ in His present and future condition, "highly exalted," "the express image of the Father's person." But even so understood, this passage would be subject to the rule of interpretation laid down by the same writer in 1 Cor 15:27: "It is manifest that he [the Father] is excepted [in all comparisons—for He is the fountain from which all blessings proceed]."

be destroyed by its Creator. As for man, he is a "little lower than the angels" (Psa. 8:5), and consequently mortal also, as is abundantly attested by the fact that our race has been dying for six thousand years and that even the saints in Christ are exhorted to seek for immortality.—Rom. 2:7.

So, then, Adam did not become mortal by reason of sin, but was created mortal—by nature he was subject or liable to the death penalty. Had he been created immortal nothing could have destroyed him; for, as we have seen, immortality is a state or condition not subject to death, but death-proof.

What, then, was Adam's condition before he sinned, and in what way did the curse affect him? What life had he to lose if he was created mortal?

We answer, that his condition in life was similar to that of the angels; he had life in full measure—lasting life—which he might have retained forever by remaining obedient to God. But, because he was not death-proof, because he did not have "life in himself," but was dependent upon conditions of divine pleasure and favour for its continuance, therefore God's threat, that if he disobeyed he should die, meant something. Had he not been mortal, God's sentence would have been an empty threat. But Adam's perfect life, which would have been continued forever had he continued obedient, was forfeited by disobedience, and he died.

Jehovah God, "who only hath immortality" or "life in himself" originally, innately, and of whom are all things, having created various orders of beings, angelic and human, in His own moral and rational likeness, but mortal and not of His divine nature, has declared that He designs a new creation—an order of beings not only morally and rationally in His resemblance, but in "the express image" of His person, and partakers of His own

“divine nature”—a prominent constituent or element of which is immortality.—2 Pet. 1:4.

With amazement, we inquire upon whom shall this high honour and distinction be conferred? Upon angels, or cherubim, or seraphim? No; but upon His Son—His specially “first-born” and “only begotten” Son, that He, who was always His obedient Son, “should in all things have the pre-eminence” over others. But before He could be so highly honoured He must be tested, proved “worthy” of so great a distinction and so high an exaltation “above his fellows.” This test was in view when the sentence of death was pronounced upon Adam and all his children in his loins; the test was that He, Christ, should lay down His life as a ransom-price for the life of Adam, and all who lost life in his transgression. And He was equal to the test, and gained the prize of “the divine nature,” “life in himself,” “immortality.”

Consider Him, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now in consequence set down at the right hand[place of favour] of the throne of God. He was rich, but for our sakes, He became poor. Inasmuch as the man and race to be redeemed were human, it was needful that He become human so as to give the ransom or corresponding price. He therefore humbled Himself and took the bondman’s form; and after He found Himself in fashion a man, He humbled Himself even unto death—even unto the most ignominious form of death—the death of the cross. “Wherefore. God hath highly exalted him [to the promised divine nature, at his resurrection], and given him a name that is above every name [Jehovah’s name excepted—1 Cor. 15:27].—Heb. 12:3, 2; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:8, 9.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive

power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."—Rev. 5:9-12.

But more, the opulence of divine favour does not stop with the exaltation of one, but has arranged that Christ Jesus, as the Captain, shall lead a company of sons of God to "glory, honour, and immortality" (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 2:7), each of whom, however, must be a spiritual "copy" or likeness of the "first begotten." And as a grand lesson of the divine sovereignty, and as a sublime contradiction to all evolution theories, God elected to call to this place of honour (as "the bride, the Lamb's wife and joint-heir"—Rev. 21:2, 9; Rom. 8:17), not the angels and the cherubs, but some from among the sinners redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. God elected the number to be thus exalted (Rev. 7:4), and predestinated what must be their characteristics if they would make their calling and election sure to a place in that company to be so highly honoured; and all the rest is left to Christ, who worketh now as the Father worked hitherto.—John 5:17.

The present age, the Gospel age, from Pentecost to the present time, is the time for the selection of this elect class, variously termed "the church," "the body of Christ," the "royal Priesthood," "the seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29), etc.; and the permission still of evil is for the purpose of developing these "members of the body of Christ" and to furnish them the opportunity of sacrificing their little and redeemed all, in the service of Him who bought them with His precious blood; and thus of developing in their hearts His spiritual likeness, that when, at the end of the age, they are presented by their Lord and Redeemer before the Father, God may see in them "the image of his Son."—Col. 1:22; Rom. 8:29.

As the reward of "glory, honour and immortality," and all the features of the divine nature, were not conferred upon the "First-begotten" until He had finished His course by completing His sacrifice, and obedience in death, so with the Church, his "bride"—counted as one, and treated collectively. As our Lord, the First-born and Captain, "entered into his glory" at His resurrection; as He there became partaker of the divine nature fully, by being "born from the dead," "born of the spirit;" as He there was highly exalted to the throne and highest favour ("right hand") of God, so He has promised that His Church, His "bride," shall in her resurrection be changed, by resurrection power, from human nature to the glory, honour, and immortality of the divine nature.

And so it is written respecting "the resurrection" of the Church: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption [immortality]. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural [animal] body, it is raised a spiritual body."—1 Cor. 15:42-44, 49.

God's plan of salvation for the race of Adam is to extend to each member of it, during the Millennium, the offer of eternal life upon the terms of the New Covenant sealed for all with the precious blood of the Lamb. But there is no suggestion anywhere that Immortality, the Divine Nature, will ever be offered or granted to any except the "elect" Church of the Gospel age—the "little flock," "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." For the others of Adam's race the offer will be "restitution" (Acts 3:19-21) to life and health and perfection of human nature—the same that Adam possessed as the earthly image of God before his fall from grace into sin and death. And when, at the close of the Millennial age, all the obedient of mankind shall have attained all that

was lost in Adam and redeemed by Christ—then all, armed with complete knowledge and experience, and hence fully able to stand the test, will be tested severely (as was Adam), but individually; and only those found in fullest heart-sympathy, as well as in outward harmony with God and His righteous arrangements, will be permitted to go beyond the Millennium into the everlasting future or “world [age] without end.” All others will be destroyed in the Second Death—“destroyed from among the people.”—Acts 3:23.

But, although there shall be no more death, neither sighing nor crying, it will not be because the victors of the Millennial age will be crowned with immortality, but because, having learned to judge between right and wrong, and their effects, they shall have formed characters in full accord with God and righteousness; and because they will have stood tests which will demonstrate that they would not wish to sin if the way were opened and no penalties attached. They will not have life in themselves, but will still be dependent upon God’s provision of food, etc., for the sustenance of life. This is particularly stated in Amos 9:14; Isa. 65:21.

Seen in this, the Scriptural light, the subject of immortality shines resplendently. It leaves the way clear for the general “gift of God, eternal life.” to be extended to all whom the Redeemer shall find willing to accept it upon the only terms upon which it could be a blessing; and it leaves the unworthy subject to the just penalty always enunciated by the great Judge of all, viz.:—

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”—Ezek. 18.

Berean Questions.

1. Did Christ die for the Church only?

Answer.—1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:14; John 1:29; 1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 2:9.

2. Did Adam possess immortality?

Answer.—No. *Psa.* 8:5; *Leeser*. What is mortal that thou are mindful of him. *Gen.* 2:17; *Gen.* 5:5.

3. Did any others beside God have immortality?

Answer.—1 *Tim.* 6:16.

4. How did Christ obtain immortality?

Answer.—*Phil.* 2:8-11; *John* 5:26; *Heb.* 12:2; *Isa.* 53:12.

5. Did Adam possess everlasting life

Answer.—Yes; if he had not sinned he would not have died. *Gen.* 3:22-24.

6. What is everlasting life and what is immortality?

Answer.—Everlasting life may be contingent upon conditions, sustenances, &c. *Ezek.* 18:20-23. Immortality means "Not liable to death." Life in oneself. *John* 5:26.

7. What does God's justice require of all His creatures?

Answer.—Obedience. *Gen.* 2:17; *Deut.* 27:10; *Ex.* 19:5; *Jer.* 42:6; *Ex.* 23:20-22; 1 *Sam.* 15:22; *Luke* 10:25-27; *James* 2:10; *Rom.* 13:6-10.

8. Can any of the human race comply with this requirement?

Answer.—*Rom.* 3:20; *Gal.* 2:16; *Gal.* 3:2, 10-12, 24; *Rom.* 8:3, 4; 1 *John* 1:8-10.

9. Will man ultimately be able to do so?

Answer.—*Jer.* 31:33, 34; *Ezek.* 11:19, 20; *Isa.* 26:9; *Micah* 4:1-5; *Isa.* 25:7-9; *Isa.* 35:8.

10. What is the only way by which man can approach God

Answer.—*John* 14:6; *John* 10:1-9; *Acts* 4:12; *Eph.* 2:18; *Heb.* 4:14-16; *Titus* 2:13, 14; *Gal.* 1:4.

11. Who only will obtain immortality, and when?

Answer.—1 *Thess.* 2:19; 1 *Thess.* 3:13; 2 *Pet.* 1:4; 1 *Pet.* 5:4; 1 *John* 3:1, 2; *Phil.* 3:21; *Col.* 3:4; *Rom.* 2:7; 2 *Tim.* 4:8.

12. Who only will obtain everlasting life?

Answer.—*John* 5:25; *Isa.* 1:19; *Matt.* 25:34; *Psa.* 37:9, 28, 29.

13. Does God compel anyone to take up their cross and become Christians during this Gospel age?

Answer.—No. *John* 6:44; *Matt.* 16:24; *Matt.* 19:21; *Rom.* 12:1.

14. Will obedience be enforced during the Messianic age?

Answer.—*Isa.* 11:1-4; *Acts* 3:23; *Phil.* 2:10, 11; *John* 5:27.

15. How is God dealing with the Church now?

Answer.—2 *Cor.* 8:12; *Mark* 12:43, 44; 1 *John* 2:1. (*Rom.* 3:22-28; *Heb.* 9:24; *Gal.* 2:16.)

16. How will the "residue of men" be dealt with in the Messianic age?
 Answer.—Isa. 28:17; Isa. 29:18-20; Isa. 62:10, 11; Isa. 52:7-10; Isa. 55:5-7; Isa. 57:14-15.
17. What did Christ's death secure
 Answer.—Psa. 49:15; Hosea 13:14; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Acts 24:15; John 11:25, 26.
18. Seeing that Christ's death merely releases man from the Adamic condemnation, how is it that the Church is to inherit Divine Nature (2 Pet. 1:4)?
 Answer.—1 Pet. 2:21; Eph. 5:1, 2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 5:4, 5; Col. 1:24; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27.
19. What is the relation of the permission of evil to the development of the Church?
 Answer.—Heb. 5:8, 9; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 4:12-14; Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 5:10.
20. Seeing that all are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, what are the necessary steps in order to become members in Christ
 Answer.—Acts 17:30; Acts 26:20; Acts 16:31; John 3:6; John 12:24-26; Matt. 10:37-39.
21. Does the Bible teach that all will be eternally saved?
 Answer.—No; but that all will have the opportunity, and those who, with a clear knowledge, wilfully refuse God's mercy will be destroyed in the second death. 1 Tim. 2:3, 4; John 1:9; Heb. 10:26, 27; Rev. 20:14, 15; Rev. 21:8.
22. Why is this destruction called "the second death"?
 Answer.—Because all dying in Adam—the first death—and being redeemed by Christ, and then wilfully continuing to sin against the Holy Spirit, will die again—the second death—from which there will be no redemption. Heb. 6:6.
23. What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?
 Answer.—Heb. 6:4-6; James 4:17; Isa. 65:20; Jer. 31:29, 30.

A LITTLE WHILE.

"Only a little while to spread the truth abroad,
 Only a little while to testify for God,
 Only a little while, the time is fleeting fast;
 Only a little while, earth's sorrows all are past."

"Only a little while, then let us do our best;
 Only a little while, then comes the promised rest;
 Only a little while, oh, what a world is this!
 Only a little while, then comes the perfect bliss."

STUDY XII.

THE SOUL.

"He spared not their souls from death."—Psa. 78:50.

Some one will possibly say, Ah! No one believes in the immortality of the body. Everybody knows that the body dies, that it needs resupply continually, and that hence it cannot be immortal. But the Scripture speak of souls. May it not be that the soul is indestructible?—that God, having made a soul, cannot destroy it?

Reason tells us that, unless there is absolute proof to the contrary, the life of every creature is subject to the will of the Creator. Now notice that the Scriptures nowhere speak of the immortality of the soul, as some people seem to suppose—neither in the translations nor in the original text. Take a concordance and try to find the expression "immortal soul," and thus you can quickly convince yourself that no such expression is found in the Scriptures. On the contrary, the Scriptures declare that "God is able to destroy both soul and body"; and again, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

That which can die, which can be destroyed, is not immortal, is not proof against death, destruction. Hence the Scriptures cited prove that neither souls nor bodies are immortal.

What, then, is the soul?

The general idea of the soul is that it is an indefinable something in us, but what it is or where it is located, few attempt to explain. This unknown something is claimed to be the real, intelligent being, while the body is merely its house or tool.

A Methodist bishop once defined a soul, thus: "It is without interior or exterior, without body, shape, or parts, and you could put a million of them into a nutshell." A very good definition of nothing, we should say!

God Able to Destroy both Soul and Body.

The body is not the soul, as some affirm; this is proved by our Lord's statement that "God is able to destroy both soul and body." And now, in view of the foregoing, if our minds be freed from prejudice, we ought to be able to learn something further on this subject by examining the inspired record of man's creation. Turning to Genesis 2:7, we read:—

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed [Heb. blew] into his nostrils the breath [Heb. wind] of life [Heb. lives plural—i.e., such as was common to all living animals]; and man became a living soul" [i.e., a sentient being].

From this account it appears that the body was formed first, but it was not a man, soul or being, until animated. It had eyes, but saw nothing; ears, but heard nothing; a mouth, but spoke nothing; a tongue, but no taste; nostrils, but no sense of smell; a heart, but it pulsated not; blood, but it was cold, lifeless; lungs, but they moved not. It was not a man, but a corpse, an inanimate body.

The second step in the process of man's creation was to give vitality to the properly "formed" and in every way prepared body; and this is described by the words, "blew into his nostrils the breath of life." When a healthy person has been drowned, and animation is wholly suspended, resuscitation has, it is said, been effected by working the arms and thus the lungs as a bellows, and so gradually establishing the breath in the nostrils. In Adam's

case it of course required no laboured effort on the part of the Creator to cause the perfect organism which He had made to breathe the life-giving oxygen of the atmosphere.

As the vitalising breath entered, the lungs expanded, the blood corpuscles were oxygenised and passed to the heart, which organ in turn propelled them to every part of the body, awakening all the prepared, but hitherto dormant, nerves to sensation and energy. In an instant the energy reached the brain, and thought, perception, reasoning, looking, touching, smelling, feeling and tasting commenced. That which was a lifeless human organism had become man, a sentient being; the "living soul" condition mentioned in the text had been reached. In other words, the term "living soul" means neither more nor less than the term "sentient being;" i.e., a being capable of sensation, perception, thought.

Moreover, even though Adam was perfect in his organism, it was necessary for him to sustain life, soul, or sentiment being, by partaking of the fruits of the trees of life. And when he sinned, God drove him from the garden, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree [plural trees or grove] of life, and eat, and live forever" [i.e., by eating continuously]. (Gen. 3:22.) How the fogs and mysteries scatter before the light of truth which shines from God's Word!

Lower Animals Also Are Souls.

Thus, also, we see why it is that the Scriptures speak of "souls" in connection with the lower animals. They, as well as man, are sentient beings or creatures of intelligence, only of lower orders. They, as well as man, can see, hear, feel, taste and smell; and each can reason up to the standard of his own organism, though none can reason as ab-

strusely nor on as high a plane as man. This difference is not because man has a different kind of life from that possessed by the lower animals; for all have similar vital forces, from the same fountain or source of life, the same Creator; all sustain life in the same manner, by the digestion of similar foods, producing blood, and muscles, and bones, etc., each according to his kind or nature; and each propagates his species similarly, bestowing the life, originally from God, upon his posterity. They differ in shape and in mental capacity.

Nor can it be said that, while man is a soul (or intelligent being) beasts are without this soul-quality or intelligence, thought, feeling. On the contrary, both man and beast have soul-quality, or intelligent, conscious being. Not only is this the statement of Scripture, but it is readily discernible as a fact, as soon as the real meaning of the word soul is comprehended, as shown foregoing. To illustrate: Suppose the creation of a perfect dog; and suppose that creation had been particularly described, as was Adam's, what difference of detail could be imagined? The body of a dog created would not be a dog until the breath of life would be caused to energise that body—then it would be a living creature with sensibilities and powers all its own—a living soul of the lower order, called dog, as Adam, when he received life, became a living creature with sensibilities and powers all his own—a living soul of the highest order of flesh beings, called man.

Man's Finer Organism.

If the great difference between man and beast is not in the life which animates both, and not from lack of soul power which both possess, can it be that the difference is in their bodies? Yes; assuredly, the natural difference is physical, in addition

to which is the fact that God has made provision for man's future, as expressed in His promises, while no such provision for a future life is made for beasts—nor are they organically capable of appreciating metaphysics. Other things being equal, the size and weight of the brain indicates capacity and intelligence. In this respect, man has been more highly endowed than the brute, by the Creator. The brute has less brains than man, and what it has belongs almost exclusively to the selfish propensities. Its highest conception of right and wrong is the will of its master, man; it cannot appreciate the sublime in morals or in nature; the Creator did not give it a brain-capacity for such things.

But although because of his fall into sin and death, man's condition is far from what it was in its original perfection when pronounced "very good" by the highest Judge; so that some, by the cultivation of the lower organs of thought, and a failure to use the higher, intellectual faculties, have dwarfed the organs of the brain representing these higher faculties, yet the organs are still there, and are capable of development, which is not the case with the most nearly perfect specimens of the brute creation. So then it is in that the Creator has endowed man with a higher and finer organism, that He has made him to differ from the brute. They have similar flesh and bones, breathe the same air, drink the same water, and eat similar food, and all are souls or creatures possessing intelligence; but man, in his better body, possesses capacity for higher intelligence and is treated by the Creator as on an entirely different plane. It is in proportion as sin degrades man from his original likeness of his Creator that he is said to be "brutish"—more nearly resembling the brutes, destitute of the higher and finer sensibilities.

To this the Scripture testimony agrees. We read (Gen. 1:30), "To you it shall be for meat, and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life [Heb. 'nephesh chayah'—a living soul]." Again (Gen. 1:20), "Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath life [Heb.—a living soul]."—See marginal readings.

The Scripture Teaching on This.

The same lesson—that the life principle is no different in mankind from what it is in all other creatures whose breath is taken through the nostrils, as distinguishing them from the fish—is taught in the account of the destruction wrought by the deluge (Gen. 6:17; 7:15, 22.) This is in full accord with King Solomon's statement that man and beast have all "one breath" [Heb. *ruach*, spirit of life]—one kind of life; and that "as the one dieth, so dieth the other." (Eccl. 3:19.) When he asks (Eccl. 3:21), "Who knoweth the spirit of man that [it] goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that [it] goeth downward to the earth?" he is controverting the heathen theory, which, even at that time, had begun to speculate that man had some inherent quality which would prevent his death, even when he seemed to die. The wise man challenges any proof, any knowledge, to such effect. This challenge to others to produce proofs, or admit that they have no such knowledge, follows his statement of the truth on the subject in verses 19 and 20.

The distinction between man and beast is not in the kind of breath or life, but in that man has a higher organism than other animals; possessing moral and intellectual powers and qualities in the image or likeness of those possessed by the Creator, who has a still higher organism, of spirit, not of flesh. And, as already shown, man's hope for a

future life lies not in his inherent powers, but in his Creator's gracious provision, which centred in the redemption of every soul of man from death, by the great Redeemer, and the consequent provision that whosoever will, may have everlasting life by resurrection, subject to the terms of the New Covenant.

Our Redeemer "poured out his soul [being] unto death," "he made his soul [being] an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10, 12); and it was the soul of Adam (and his posterity) that he thus bought with his precious blood—by making his soul [being] an offering for sin. Consequently souls were redeemed, and souls are to be awakened, resurrected.—Psa. 49:15.

Many suppose that the bodies buried are to be restored atom for atom, but, on the contrary, the apostle declares, "Thou sowest [in death] not that body which shall be." In the resurrection God will give to each person (to each soul or sentient being) such a body as his infinite wisdom has been pleased to provide; to the Church, the "Bride" selected in this age, spirit bodies; to the restitution class, human bodies, but not the same ones lost in death.—1 Cor. 15:37, 38.

As in Adam's creation, the bringing together of an organism and the breath of life produced a sentient being or soul, so the dissolution of these, from any cause, puts an end to sentient being—stopping thoughts and feelings of every kind. The soul (i.e., sentient being) ceases; the body returns to dust, as it was; while the spirit, or breath of life, returns to God, who imparted it to Adam, and to his race through him. (Eccl. 12:7.) It returns to God in the sense that it is no longer amenable to human control, as in pro-creation, and can never be recovered except by divine power. Recognising this fact, the Lord's instructed ones commit

their hope of future life by resurrection to God and to Christ, His now exalted representative. (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59.) So, then, had God made no provision for man's future life by a ransom and a promised resurrection, death would have been the end of all hope for humanity.—1 Cor. 15:14-18.

God's Provision for Our Living Again.

But God has thus made provision for our living again; and even since He made known His gracious plan, those who speak and write intelligently upon the subject (for instance, the inspired Scripture writers), as if by common consent, speak of the unconscious interim between death and the resurrection morning, in which sentient being is suspended, as a "sleep." Indeed, the illustration is an excellent one; for the dead will be totally unconscious of the lapse of time, and the moment of awakening will seem to them like the next moment after the moment of their dissolution. For instance, we read that, speaking of Lazarus' death, our Lord said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Afterward, because the disciples were slow to comprehend, He said, "Lazarus is dead." (John 11:11.) Were the theory of consciousness in death correct, is it not remarkable that Lazarus gave no account of his experience during those four days? None will claim that he was in a "hell" of torment, for our Lord calls him His "friend"; and if he had been in heavenly bliss our Lord would not have called him from it, for that would have been an unfriendly act. But, as our Lord expressed it, Lazarus slept, and He awakened him to life, to consciousness, to his sentient being, or soul returned or revived; and all this was evidently a favour greatly appreciated by Lazarus and his friends.

The thought pervades the Scriptures that we are

now in the night of dying and sleeping, as compared with the morning of awakening and resurrection. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Psa. 30:5.

The apostles also frequently used this appropriate, hopeful, and peaceful figure of speech. For instance, Luke says of Stephen, the first martyr, "he fell asleep;" and in recording Paul's speech at Antioch he used the same expression, "David fell on sleep." (Acts 7:60; 13:36.) Peter uses the same expression, saying, "The fathers fell asleep." (2 Pet. 3:4.) And Paul used it many times, as the following quotations show:—

"The greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."—1 Cor. 15:6.

"If there be no resurrection, . . . then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.—1 Cor. 15:13-18.

"Christ is risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept."—1 Cor. 15:20.

"Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep."—1 Cor. 15:51.

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep."—1 Thess. 4:13.

"Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring [from the dead] with [by] him."—1 Thess. 4:14.

When the Kingdom, the resurrection time, comes, "we who are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord shall not precede them that are asleep."—1 Thess. 4:15.

They "fell asleep" in peace, to await the Lord's Day—the Day of Christ, the Millennial Day—fully persuaded that He [Christ] is able to keep **that** which they committed unto Him against that day. (2 Tim. 1:12.) This same thought runs through the Old Testament as well—from the time that God first preached to Abraham the Gospel of a resurrection; the expression, "He slept with his fathers,"

is very common in the Old Testament. But Job puts the matter in very forcible language, saying, "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be [over] past!" The present dying time is the time of God's wrath—the curse of death being upon all, because of the original transgression. However, we are promised that in due time the curse will be lifted, and a blessing will come through the Redeemer to all the families of the earth; and so Job continues, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change come; [then] thou shalt call (John 5:25) and I will answer thee; thou shalt have a desire unto the work of thine hands." (Job 14:14, 15.) And we of the New Testament times read our Lord's response, "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man" [calling them to awake and come to a full knowledge of God and to a full opportunity of everlasting life].—John 5:25, 29.

An Illustration—A Candle.

Let us illustrate the human and animal body, soul and spirit, by something less complex and better understood generally; for instance, an unlighted candle would correspond to an inanimate human body or corpse, the lighting of the candle would correspond to the spark of life originally imparted by the Creator; the flame or light corresponds to sentient being or intelligence or soul quality; the oxygenised atmosphere which unites with the carbon of the candle in supporting the flame corresponds to the breath of life, or spirit of life, which unites with the physical organism in producing soul or intelligent existence. If an accident should occur which would destroy the candle, the flame, of course, would cease; so if a human or animal body be destroyed, as by consumption or accident, the soul, the life, the intelligence, ceases.

Or, if the supply of air were cut off from the candle flame, as by an extinguisher or snuffer, or by submerging the candle in water, the light would be extinguished, even though the candle remained unimpaired. So the soul, life, existence, of man or animal would cease if the breath of life were cut off by drowning or asphyxiation, while the body might be comparatively sound. As the lighted candle might be used under favourable conditions to light other candles, but the flame, once extinguished, the candle could neither relight itself nor other candles, so the human or animal body, while alive, as a living soul or being, can, under divine arrangement, start or propagate other souls or beings—offspring; but, so soon as the spark of life is gone, soul or being has ceased, and all power to think, feel or propagate has ceased. In harmony with this we read in the Scriptures of Jacob's children: "All the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls." (Exod. 1:5.) Jacob received his spark of life as well as his physical organism, and hence the united product of these, his soul or intelligent being, from Isaac, and thence from Adam, to whom alone God ever directly imparted life. And Jacob passed on the life and organism and soul to his posterity; and so with all humanity.

A candle might be relighted by anyone having the ability; but by divine arrangement the human body, bereft of the spark of life, "wasteth away," "returneth to the dust from which it was taken," and the spark of life cannot be re-enchanted except by divine power—a miracle. The promise of resurrection is therefore a promise of a relighting, a re-enchanted of animal existence or soul; and since there can be no being or soul without a body and restored life-power or spirit, it follows that a promised resurrection or restoration of soul or being

implies new bodies, new organisms. Thus the Scriptures assure us that human bodies which return to dust will not be restored, but that in the resurrection God will give such new bodies as it may please Him to give.—1 Cor. 15:37-40.

The apostle here declares that in the resurrection there will be a special class accounted worthy of a new nature, spiritual instead of human or fleshly; and, as we should expect, he shows that this great change of nature will be effected by giving these a different kind of body. The candle may here again serve to illustrate: Suppose the fleshly or human nature to be illustrated by a tallow candle, the new body might be illustrated by a wax candle of a brighter flame, or indeed by an electric arc-light apparatus.

With any power and wisdom less than that of our Creator guaranteeing the resurrection, we might justly fear some break or slip by which the identity would be lost, especially with those granted the great change of nature by a share in the first (chief) resurrection to spirit being. But we can securely trust this and all things to Him with whom we have to do in this matter. He who knows our very thoughts can reproduce them in the new brains so that not one valuable lesson or precious experience shall be lost. He is too wise to err and too good to be unkind; and all that he has promised He will fulfill in a manner exceedingly abundantly better than we can ask or think.

The terms, body, soul, and spirit, may be used of the Church collectively. For instance, the apostle says: "I pray God [that] your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23.) This prayer must be understood to apply to the Church as a whole—the elect church, whose names are written in heaven. The true spirit has been preserved

in the little flock. Its body is discernible to-day also, notwithstanding the multitudes of tares that would hide as well as choke it. And its soul, its activity, its intelligence, its sentient being, is in evidence everywhere, lifting up the standard of the people—the cross, the ransom.

In no other way could we apply the apostle's words; for, however much people may differ respecting the preservation of the individual spirits and souls of the people addressed, all will agree that their bodies have not been preserved, but have returned to dust, like those of others. Besides, the words body, soul, and spirit, are in the singular, not in the plural.

Berean Questions.

QUESTIONS WITH INSPIRED ANSWERS.

1. Are the promises to the saints of the Gospel Age heavenly or earthly promises?

Answer.—“As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” We are partakers of the heavenly calling.”—1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 3:1; 6:4; Phil. 3:14; Eph. 2:6; 2 Thess. 1:11, 12; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10.

2. Will the elect Church, the “overcomers,” the “saints,” continue to be human beings, “of the earth earthy”?

Answer.—“God hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these we might become partakers of the divine nature”—“new creatures.”—2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:17, 18.

3. When will the full change (begun in us by a change of heart, called the begetting of the spirit) be completed? When shall we be made like Christ our Lord?

Answer.—“We [saints] shall all be changed.” . . . “The dead [saints] shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . this mortal shall put on immortality.” “Sown a natural [animal] body, it is raised a spiritual body.” “So also is the [special] resurrection of the [special, elect] dead.”—1 Cor. 15:50-53, 42-44; Phil. 3:11.

4. Are full recompenses, either rewards or punishments, to be expected before the resurrection?

Answer.—"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—Luke 14:14; Rev. 11:18; Matt. 16:27.

5. What is the hope held out for all except the elect Church of the Gospel Age?

Answer.—"The whole [human] creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God [the saints]." Then shall follow "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," in which "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" through the elect "Seed" of Abraham.—Rom. 8:22, 19; Acts 3:19-21; Gal. 3:16, 29.

6. Are the dead conscious or unconscious

Answer.—"The dead know not anything."—Eccl. 9:5; Psal. 146:4; Isa. 38:18, 19.

7. Have the departed saints been praising the Lord all along during the past ages?

Answer.—"The dead praise not the Lord."—Psal. 115; 17; 6:5; Eccl. 9:6.

8. Did the prophets receive their reward at death? or was it reserved in God's plan to be given them at the beginning of the Millennium, the age of judgment?

Answer.—"The time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets," is at the beginning of the sounding of the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, at the end of the Gospel Age.—Rev. 11:15, 18; Psal. 17:15.

9. Were the apostles promised translation to heaven at death?—or must they wait for the Lord's second coming?

Answer.—"As I said to the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say unto you [apostles], 'I will come again and receive you unto myself.'"—John 13:33; 14:3.

10. Was it proper for the saints of the Gospel Age, except such as would be living at the time of the Lord's return, to expect to be crowned at death?

Answer.—"When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5.

11. Did the apostles expect glory at death or at the second coming of Christ?

Answer.—"When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."—Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2.

12. Were the saints to "shine" in death?

Answer.—"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, . . . and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament [as the sun]."

—Dan. 12:2, 3; Matt. 13:40-43.

13. Were the ancient worthies rewarded at death?

Answer.—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises; . . . that they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11:13, 39, 40.

14. David was one of the holy prophets: Was he rewarded by being taken to heaven?

Answer.—"David is not ascended into the heavens."—Acts 2:34.

15. How many had gone to heaven up to the time of our Lord's ascension?

Answer.—"No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man."

—John 3:13.

16. Can He who created man destroy him? Can the soul be destroyed by its Creator?

Answer.—"Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna [the 'Second Death']. 'He spared not their souls from death.' 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'—Matt. 10:28; Psa. 78:50; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Psa. 22:29; Joshua 10:35; Isa. 38:17; Psa. 56:13; 30:3; 119:175; Matt. 26:38; Isa. 53:10, 12.

17. How great importance did the Apostle Paul attach to the doctrine of the resurrection?

Answer.—"If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen. . . . Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."—1 Cor. 15:13-18.

18. Are the unjust now being tormented in some unknown hell or do they always meet the full penalty of their unrighteousness in the present life?

Answer.—"The Lord knoweth how to . . . reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment [the Millennial Day] to be punished."—2 Pet. 2:9; Job 21:30.

19. What will be the end of those who when tried are found incorrigible—wilfully wicked?

Answer.—They shall "go away into a cutting off from life," "be punished with everlasting destruction [a destruction which will never be terminated by a resurrection];" for still "The wages of sin is death," "the Second Death;" and still the gift of God, eternal life, is to be had only in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life;" he that hath not the Son shall not receive that gift.—Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:14, 15; Matt. 25:46; 1 John 5:12; 2 Thess. 1:9.

20. Does the Bible speak of the soul as immortal?

Answer.—No; but speaks of man as mortal. Ps. 8:4 (Leeser Trans. What is mortal); 1 Cor. 15:53.

21. Do the Scriptures speak of the lower animals as souls?

Answer.—Numbers 31:28; Gen. 9: 3, 4, 9, 10; Gen. 1:21, 24. Living creature is the same word in Hebrew.

22. Do the lower animals have the same spirit (breath of lives) as man, and do the Scriptures use the same words for both?

Answer.—Gen. 7:21, 22; Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 3:19-21.

23. What is the meaning of "the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7).

Answer.—The spirit is the principle of life; God is the great Fountain of Life; in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28); He withdraws the breath (spirit), and in that very day the thoughts perish (Psa. 146:4).

24. Can the soul die?

Answer.—Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23; Psa. 78:50; Psa. 56:13; Job 7:5; Jas. 5:19, 20; Acts 3:23.

24. Did Christ's soul die?

Answer.—Isa. 53:10-12; Acts 2:31.

*A flood of light on many Scriptural questions can be obtained from a pamphlet entitled, "What Say the Scriptures About Hell?" It examines every text of the Bible containing the word hell and assists the Bible student in "rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

An interesting pamphlet on "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" will be sent, while the supply lasts, on receipt of postal request.

" 'Tis but a little and we come
To our reward, our crown, our home!
Another year, or more, or less,
And we have crossed the wilderness;
Finished the toil, the rest begun,
The battle fought, the triumph won!"

"We grudge not, then, the toil, the way;
Its ending is the endless day!
We shrink not from the tempest keen,
With little of the calm between:
We welcome each descending sun;
Ere morn our joy may be begun!"

STUDY XIII.

"THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME."

"We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;" "for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." "And the Desire of all nations shall come."—Rom. 8:22 19; Hag. 2:7.

Thus the apostle and the prophet refer to the woes of earth and the great remedy which God has provided, and which is soon to be applied. None experienced in life or acquainted with history will dispute the correctness of the apostle's statement. And the declaration of the prophet, that God will eventually establish a reign of righteousness in the earth which, when realised, will indeed be the desire of all nations, is borne out by the testimony of every prophet and apostle (Acts 3:19-21), and cannot, therefore, be disputed by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible.

The cause of all creation's groaning and pain is sin; for all the moral as well as the physical degradation which directly or indirectly causes the pain and groaning of humanity is part of the wages of sin. Humanity is thus under a blight, and suffers both individually and as a whole. Its own imperfect and often unjust governments, as well as its aches and pains of body and mind, are the natural consequences of its blemished, fallen condition. And although men can do something toward general improvement, their efforts are at best but feeble and spasmodic; they are utterly incapable of releasing themselves from their difficulties. Their varying successes—but on the whole futile efforts—for the past six thousand years prove this conclusively.

They have never yet, in all the centuries they have had for experiment, succeeded in establishing a perfect government; nor have they silenced the groans and wiped away the tears of the race, nor lifted it up, physically or mentally, or morally, to the image of God, in which they were created,, as represented in Adam. Diseases of every description still prey upon them physically. There are still burning fevers, wasting ulcers, frightful cancers, loathsome skin and poisonous blood diseases; and there are sightless eyes, deaf ears, dumb tongues broken backs and limbs, and other physical disorders and deformities. Mentally, their condition is still worse: some are crazed; others are partially so; and in all the race not one is perfectly balanced. Morally, their condition is no less deplorable; selfishness, and greed, and pride, and love of display, and hatred, and malice, and evil speaking, and deceit, and envy, and contention, and war, and bloodshed, wring agonising groans from the lips of millions; and desolate widows and helpless orphans and broken-hearted mothers and grief-stricken fathers, and disappointed friends, still weep over the graves of buried hopes and fond ambitions.

A Bow of Promise.

Truly, it is a groaning creation still; and yet, as the apostle suggests, it is not hopeless; it is waiting for something, it knows not exactly what—a panacea for sickness, and pain, and sorrow, and death, and a just and righteous government, which will lift up the poorest and meanest from the mire of ignorance and squalor, to comfort and happiness and a share of life's luxuries. It is looking forward to "a good time coming," "a golden age," of which even heathen poets and philosophers have dreamed and sung in glowing terms. And some, catching a

strain from the divine inspiration, though unconscious of how it will be brought about, sing of the blessed Millennium—

"When, man to man united,
And every wrong thing righted,
The whole world shall be lighted
As Eden was of old."

But what heathen poets and philosophers, and all mankind, have longed and vaguely hoped for—but have proved themselves utterly incapable of bringing about, with all their statecraft, and priestcraft, and multiplied religious ceremonies, and forms of godliness without the power—God, through His prophets, has clearly and definitely foretold will come. And further, He has shown exactly how it is to be brought about—that it is to come to pass through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messenger of Jehovah, who nearly nineteen centuries ago redeemed the world, giving His life as the ransom price for the life of the world; and who will shortly set up His Millennial Kingdom and establish His authority over the redeemed world. He will not oppress the people to exalt Himself, as human rulers have done; but will bless "all the families of the earth" through a wise and righteous administration.—Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8, 16; Psalms 9:8; Isaiah 32:1.

Our Lord Jesus, by the grace of God, having "tasted death for every man," and thus secured the right to give lasting life to all who shall prove themselves worthy of it, the object of His Millennial reign will be to so instruct, train, and discipline men as to enable them to become worthy of lasting life, on the original conditions—perfection and obedience. To this end He will first "rule with a rod of iron" (Psalms 2:9)—with power and force, causing in the overthrow of present imperfect, selfish, proud, and unjust systems, "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation"

(Dan. 12:1); and then he will "fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2:14.) He will restrain and humble the wicked and selfish, and bless and lift up the meek and those seeking righteousness (Zeph. 2:3; Matt. 5:5); finally making an end of sin and all its train of evils, by destroying (completely and forever) all who then, with full knowledge and appreciation, still love sin; and by bestowing upon all who shall then love righteousness "the gift of God," everlasting life.—Rom. 6:23.

Obstacles to Belief in Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

All this would seem reasonable to thinking people but for two conditions. One is, that another and an unscriptural view has for centuries predominated, and the people have been instructed from infancy in that direction. The second condition is, that so long a period has elapsed before the establishment of His Kingdom as the remedy for sin and its disorders. Yet so convinced are people of the propriety of such a divine rulership that, regardless of facts and Scripture, some claim that Christ is now reigning over and ruling the world. And yet, if posted in the world's history, and candid, all must admit that earth's government has not been, nor is it yet, a rule of righteousness such as the prophets predicted of the reign of Christ (Isa. 32:1.) On the contrary, it is manifest that the kingdoms of this world are all under the power, and subject to the manipulations of the invisible "prince of this world." Satan, who takes advantage of the darkness of human ignorance, superstition and depravity to rule men through their passions and prejudices.

Poor, frail humanity has indeed made some noble efforts at self-government, but the unseen and un-

recognised powers of darkness have been more than a match for its efforts, and have succeeded in keeping in power a majority who are not lovers of righteousness. Nor can we hope for better than present results so long as selfishness is the rule of action.

People naturally wonder that God has not long since exerted His great power (His Kingdom power and authority) to suppress sin and to lift mankind out of its present state of ignorance, superstition, grovelling depravity, disease and death. But they reason that God's future dealings should be judged by the past, and since six thousand years have passed without such an interposition, they think we cannot expect such a rule or Kingdom in the future, believing that all things must continue as they now are, and have been from the foundation of the world.—2 Pet. 3:4.

But what reply can be made to this objection? We answer: It can be shown that the Scriptures teach that God has not only promised such a Kingdom for the purpose of blessing the world, but that He also foretold the long period intervening, in which evil has been permitted. And they show good and sufficient reasons for the six thousand years' delay. This, clearly seen, should remove every obstacle to belief in the promised Millennial Kingdom. Yet, in examining the reasons for the delay of the reign of righteousness, let us not forget that it is only as measured by the shortness of the present life that six thousand years seem long. With God, "A thousand years are but as yesterday."—Psa. 90:4.

Why the Long Delay?

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the first promise of deliverance, the re-

demption was accomplished; and nearly two thousand more fill the measure of the Gospel age, for the selection and development of the Gospel church; while the whole long six thousand years were designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violaters of God's just and holy law—an experience which will be of inestimable value to all, and that to all eternitiy. By contrast, it will lead to such an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ's Millennial reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted—"The desire of all nations."

The delay, from the time of the Calvary-redemption, to the Millennial age, while it served this purpose to the world, served also and particularly a further purpose—the development of the Church a "little flock" of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and therefore chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual kingdom and glory and His Millennial work—to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the promised kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16, 29.

The selection of this company, as individuals, has been in process during the entire Gospel age now closing, though, as a class, they were foreknown from the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4.) That is, God predetermined to exalt to this kingdom honour and restitution work a certain class each of whom should meet certain predetermined conditions; and the Gospel age of nearly two thousand years was appointed as the time for developing, testing and selecting the individuals who should compose that class. The election of these individuals is not arbitrary, but according to fitness; the qualifications being, first, justification by

faith in Christ; then meekness and devotedness to God's service, at the cost of self-sacrifice, even unto death.

Many (justified believers) were "called" or invited to share these kingdom honours, but only the above-mentioned, a faithful few, will be selected or chosen; the majority even of professed Christians, we are informed, will fail to make their calling and election sure; and hence will fail to share these kingdom glories as joint-heirs with Christ their Lord—though with the world they will be blessed and disciplined under this kingdom. During the Millennial age Christ's power will be exercised to prevent deceptions, to clear away ignorance, to strengthen the weak and to lead and restore to sight those now blinded by the god of this world. (2 Cor. 4:4) A thousand enticements to sin which appeal specially to the depraved appetites of the fallen race now, will not be tolerated when the new, heavenly rule is established. But the Gospel church—the kingdom class—is called and tested during this age, while evil is permitted to hold sway, in order that their testing may be like that of gold tried in the fire. This company will be complete when the present age ends, and the control of earth will then be entrusted to them, under and in co-operation with the Lord Jesus, then the King of kings.—1 Cor. 6:2.

Looking for the Kingdom of God.

No student of the Bible can have overlooked the fact that the constant theme of our Lord and His apostles was the coming kingdom of God. The Jewish people, as a nation, had for centuries expected Messiah's coming to be the ruler of the world; and they naturally expected that as He was to come of their nation they would be His soldiers, co-workers, and joint-heirs in that kingdom. They

knew themselves to be the natural seed of Abraham, and inferred that they were indispensable to God's plan. They saw not that spiritual children of God, of the faith and loyalty of Abraham were meant.

But the real greatness of the promised kingdom and its work of blessing was not appreciated by Israel: they expected a kingdom similar to the kingdoms of this world; that Messiah, as a fleshly being of the seed of Abraham, would establish His kingdom at Jerusalem, and that His glory would be the earthly glory of purple, and fine linen, and gold, and silver, and the usual accompaniments of earthly royalty. And their pride and ambition longed for the time when this promised King should exalt Himself above the Cæsars, and exalt them above all the nations of the earth. Hence their rejection of Him who came humbly, born in a manger, with no assumption of titles, or earthly honours, or influence, or even friends; and yet He came proclaiming the kingdom of heaven at hand and Himself the promised King.

So thoroughly impressed upon the Jewish mind was the thought that Messiah's coming meant the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, that several times the "common people" would have taken Christ by force to make Him king; but He withdrew that their ardour might cool, knowing that all those who shouted "Hosanna to the Son [and heir] of David" were not of the class whom the Father designed should be the joint-heirs with Him of that kingdom. He knew, too, that the Father's time for His exaltation to power had not yet come, and that first He must die to purchase those whom He was afterward to reign over—to whom He might therefore restore the original blessings and favours lost to all through Adam's failure.—Rom. 5:12-19.

Like others, the twelve apostles held this hope of the kingdom and believed Christ to be the promised Messiah, the King of kings. And our Lord Jesus, so far from ever contradicting their ideas, always encouraged them, and told them that they should yet sit with Him in His throne. But He explained that first He must suffer many things and be rejected of that generation (people), even as it had been written in the prophets, "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead;" and He said to them: O, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; was it not needful for Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His [kingdom] glory?—Luke 24:25, 26.

The Nobleman's Return.

One of our Lord's parables, given just before His crucifixion, as for the very purpose of teaching His apostles that the expected kingdom would be deferred until His second coming. It is introduced thus: "And he spoke this parable unto them because they thought that the kingdom of God would be manifested immediately." (Luke 19:11-27.) That parable represents the Gospel age as the period in which Christ, "the Nobleman," went "into a far country" (heaven) to receive for Himself a kingdom—to be invested with authority. The parable also shows that during the absence of the Nobleman, the opponents of His rule are in the majority and hold sway; they even declare that they do not desire Him to come and establish His kingdom, preferring to be let alone as they are—"They sent an embassy after him, saying, We do not desire this man's rule."

The parable shows, too, the proper attitude of those who love the Nobleman. To His servants He entrusted certain talents—here represented as ten pounds, all of which could, during His absence,

be utilised in His service—saying to them, “Trade herewith till I come.” (R.V.) Obedient to this command, they are to use their various talents to forward the interests of His coming kingdom. And finally, the parable shows that the Nobleman will surely return with full power, and that He will use it to reward, with a share in the kingdom, those faithful to Him, and to destroy all opposed to His rule of righteousness. Thank God, there is good reason to believe that many now enemies to the King of kings will not be such when present misconceptions are cured by the increased knowledge of the King’s character, plan and kingdom, then to be afforded to all, for which we pray, “Thy kingdom come!”

A SCRAP OF HISTORY.

The Start of Present So-Called Christian Kingdoms

During the first century of its existence the Church held firmly to the apostolic teaching and waited for the second coming of the Lord Jesus and the establishment then of the long-promised kingdom of God and its rule of righteousness, in which triumph all overcoming Christians were to share with Christ. The period of that reign, it was generally understood, would be a thousand years. —Rev. 20:2-4.

The first century was the period of the Church’s purity and fervour, before she left her first love. But as time passed and the expected Lord came not, the love of many waxed cold and their hopes turned in other directions. Then, as Christianity became formalistic, Grecian philosophers came into the Church, and the doctrines of Christ became blended with heathen mythologies, producing the foretold great apostasy, or falling away from the true faith. (2 Thess. 2.3.) Nevertheless, there was always a

faithful, though small, minority, which clung to the truth; for the Lord has never left His truth without witnesses.

It was at this time that the degenerated Christian system conceived the view commonly held since, that the Church was to establish Christ's kingdom upon the earth, without waiting for the young Nobleman's return, and that Christ would come after the Millennial reign of the Church had ended—to approve her work. This is styled the post-millennarian view of the Lord's coming. This view introduced into the nominal church an aggressive political policy; and thenceforth the Church sought influence with the civil power—and that successfully, though to her injury and apostasy. It was not long until Christianity was recognised by Constantine, the Roman emperor. Soon, from among several aspiring chiefs, or bishops, the bishop of the city of Rome rose to prominence and influence in religious matters, and finally to influence in the empire. In 534 A.D. the Emperor of Rome, Justinian, recognised the bishop of Rome as chief bishop, or Pope—the head of the religious affairs of the Roman empire, whose emperors had long held the office and title of Pontifex Maximus, or Chief Priest.

This great success, though accomplished by cunning, trickery and scheming political intrigue wholly foreign to the spirit of true Christianity, and in opposition to the express counsel of the Lord and the apostles (Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-12; and 1 Pet. 5:3), was hailed as the beginning of the establishment of Christ's kingdom in power. By this time, be it remembered, the nominal church numbered millions who were Christians in name merely and were totally ignorant of the doctrines of Christ; for the clergy had gradually lowered the true standard, amalgamated errors and exalted themselves,

to gain popularity and to draw the people, through fear and superstition, to their support. And when the imperial authority began to recognise the apostate church and to concede its false claims, the unregenerate heathen millions rushed into her bosom, adding to her defilement their uncircumcised views and heathen superstitions.

The Counterfeit or Antichrist Kingdom Set Up.

But though nominal Christianity had now gained freedom from persecution, civil recognition and, finally, religious jurisdiction as Papacy, her ambition, sustained by her post-millennial error, was far from satisfied. Scheming, plotting, etc., continued, under the theory that the end to be gained (the subjugation of the world in the name of Christ's Kingdom) justifies the means; until the power, authority and crowns of the civil rulers of Europe were subjected to the popes. The beginning of this temporal power was gradual, from A.D. 539, but it was fully established in A.D. 800, when Charlemagne, king of France, was crowned by Pope Leo III., and accepted from him, and by his supposed divine authority, the title of Emperor of the West. There, really, what was afterwards known as "The Holy Roman Empire" had its beginning.

Thenceforth it was boldly claimed and generally admitted (except by the Lord's faithful few, who discerned the apostasy and waited for the establishment in righteousness of this true, promised kingdom) that the (nominal) church was God's Kingdom in the world, and that the popes successively represented Christ as King of kings, while, as His joint-heirs, cardinals and bishops filled the places promised to the overcomers. In support of these claims, the universal authority of the popes in matters both secular and religious was claimed and

admitted; and kings and emperors representing the greatest nations of Europe and the world prostrated themselves at the feet of the pope, acknowledging him as King of kings. Every title which the Scriptures apply to the true Christ, and every prophecy describing His future kingdom and its glory, have been applied by the popes to themselves, and the kingdom thus introduced, was which none other than the kingdom of Antichrist, the counterfeit of the true, predicted by the prophets and the apostles. (See *Thess. 2:3-7*; *Dan. 7:25, 26*; *Rev. 13:4-8*) The deception was so great and magnificent that all the nations of Europe were deceived; and as the Lord Himself foretold, had it been possible, the very elect (the faithful) would also have been deceived by it.

But the inevitable came: the reverence and flattery of the people, the pride and power of the clergy, and especially of the higher dignitaries, gradually sunk the doctrines and practices so low as to excite the disgust and open the eyes of the honest and blinded souls connected with the system. It was nearly a century after the invention of printing, when men were beginning to think for themselves, that the public sale of indulgences by the authority of the pope for the purpose of raising money for the completion of St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome, and particularly by one John Tetzels, a Dominican monk of notorious character and shameless effrontery aroused general indignation. Then, under the bold leadership of Luther, Zwingli, Carlstadt, Melancthon, and others, a reformation movement set in which, though beset by many hindrances, is not yet extinct, thank God. It is progressing steadily toward the utter repudiation of priestcraft and the various superstitions and errors of the dark ages, back to the old landmarks of primitive simplicity,

and purity which characterised the apostolic Church, both in life and in doctrines.

Reformation Nobly Begun.

Luther, Knox, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and others of their time, though still befogged by the errors of Antichrist, which for so many centuries held the world as under a mesmeric power, made remarkable progress out of darkness toward the full, clear light. When all the circumstances of their time are considered, it cannot be denied that they were remarkable men, and that they took not only a courageous step, but a long one in the right direction. The trouble is that those who since have followed these leaders have taken their names as sects, without having their spirit of reform. So far from continuing the reform movement, each party, or sect, set itself against all light, truth and reformation in advance of what its leader had seen and advocated. Hence reform almost ceased with the reformers of the sixteenth century. What progress has since been made has been in opposition, not only to Papacy, but to professed Protestants as well.

But the course of the reformers was not a wholly uncompromising one. They soon saw that the masses of the people were so steeped in ignorance that they could not appreciate the Scriptural teaching that God is no respecter of persons; that in His sight all men are free, and that king, peasant and slave are on a common footing before God. So long had people been taught that the pope and church dignitaries represented God, and must be obeyed as God; so long had they been taught that kings and princes, when crowned and commissioned by the pope, were God's appointed rulers, reigning by God's authority in matters civil, as the "clergy" by the same authority reigned as princes in matters

religious; so long had they been taught that to deny or oppose such pope-sanctioned authority was to deny or oppose God and His Kingdom, that (under this ignorance and superstition) to have declared the whole truth would have involved all Europe in anarchy and lawlessness. Stepping out of such deep slavery of mind and body into full liberty, the masses were far from prepared to use it wisely.

This, indeed, was the basis of the conflict between the early reformers. Zwingli in Switzerland was a representative of some who took their stand for full liberty; he denied not only the authority of the pope to rule the church, but also his authority to appoint civil rulers in the name of God. He claimed for the people the right to elect their rulers. Here Luther wavered for a time as to what course to pursue when he saw that the reform, fully carried out, would take away the authority, not only of the pope, but also the authority of all the princes and kings of earth appointed by him. While retired for ten months in Wartburg Castle under the hiding and protection of Elector Frederick, Luther reflected on the situation carefully; then he came forth to oppose Zwingli, Carlstadt and others under whose preaching the images in the churches were being dashed to pieces and the Mass abolished. His plea was moderation. He cooled the rising ardor of the Germans, and with Melanchthon turned the German reformation into the channel which it finally took. The German princes, on the one hand glad to be freed from the abject bondage to the Papacy, and on the other hand glad to escape the growing tendency of teachings such as Zwingli's, toward Republicanism, recognised in the teaching of Luther and Melanchthon a way of escape from both, which would still preserve their powers, and even increase them. From policy, therefore, many of the German princes embraced the Lutheran

cause which prospered, while the yet more thorough reformers and their works went down.

Why did not God forward the greater and purer views? it may be asked. Because it was not then due time, we answer. But slowly, after three centuries, thinking people will admit that Zwingli and Carlstadt were much nearer the truth, much more thorough teachers of reform than Luther. D'Aubigne (*Hist.*, Vol. 3, p. 243) upon this subject cautiously but forcibly remarks: "Notwithstanding his opposition to Papacy, Luther had a strong conservative instinct. Zwingli, on the contrary, was predisposed to radical reforms. Both these divergent tendencies were needed. If Luther and his followers had been alone in the work, it would have stopped short in its progress, and the principle of reformation would not have wrought its destined effect."

Luther, though he had denounced the Papacy as Antichrist, and declared that the popes had no right or authority whatever to rule the world in the name of Christ, was led by his course of moderation into doing the very thing he had condemned in Papacy. The princes who remained in harmony with Papacy, were forward to claim its sanction as the true basis of authority over the people; and those who espoused Luther's side of course looked to him who claimed to represent the true reformed Church, to pronounce in their favour—as the choice of the true Church, and hence the divine choice. Having taken the stand he did, escape from the dilemma was impossible; and there was considerable truth in Luther's joke, when, later on, he called himself the German Pope.

Thus it came that Protestantism continued the very error that lay at the foundation of the great apostacy—the very error it started out to remedy. Instead of advocating freedom—government of and

by the people—it arrayed itself on the side of those falsely styled kingdoms of God whose rulers were glad to have assistance in holding the control which Antichrist had given them over the people. They desired to hold forever, for themselves and their families, the fat positions already attained. Hence, each of the various governments of Europe is wedded to some religious system, which it supports, and at the hands of whose officers, with religious pomp and ceremony, titles and offices are entered upon. No matter how villainous, or imbecile or insane or opposed to both the letter and spirit of God's Word, these announce their authority to perpetuate wrongs under the hypocritical mask (authorised first by Papacy, and since conceded by all Protestant sects)—king, queen or emperor, "by the grace of God."

Thus we find to-day many so-called Christian kingdoms in the world, as well as many churches, though our Lord only established one church, which in due time was to be completed and glorified to constitute the one promised Kingdom of God. In the light of God's Word we must deny that kings and emperors now reign by the grace of God, or that God is in any degree responsible for their misruling, though He predetermined to permit these various experiments at self-government for an appointed time—"until he come, whose right it is." (Ezek. 21:27.) The facts of history corroborate the testimony of the Scriptures that present governments are under the control of "the prince of this world." (John 14:30; Eph. 2:2). To deceive the people and to control them more thoroughly, Satan favours and advances to place and power those persons and systems agreeable to his plans; and to make the deception complete, he does this in the name of God and at the hands of the apostate church.—2 Cor. 11:14, 15.

How much of the spirit of Christ do these kingdoms manifest? Hear louder and louder down the centuries the clash of arms, the thunder of artillery, the tread of mighty armies, and the groans of the dying, in the strife of these so-called kingdoms of God to annihilate each other; and remember, at no other period of the world's history were there ever, as to-day, armies numbering eleven or twelve millions of men, thoroughly equipped, and ready at a moment's call, to rush to battle, armed with weapons of carnage many-fold more dreadful and destructive than were ever before known, which make them equal to a hundred millions in former times.

Mark the opposition and injustice and tyranny and misrule; and behold how giant evils are licensed to enslave and degrade and oppress mankind, and say not that these are Immanuel's kingdoms. Surely they bear little resemblance to the character of that Kingdom promised under the "Prince of Peace!"

When Christ's Kingdom has come, it will indeed be "the desire of all nations." It will be just what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, dashing the now tottering kingdoms of this world in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9), breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression, putting down all authority and power opposed to it, humbling the proud and high-minded, and finally teaching all the world to be still and know that the Lord's Anointed has taken the dominion. (Psa. 46:10.) Then the blessing of His peaceful reign will begin to be experienced. Truth and equity will be established on a sure and permanent footing; "justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17); and the great restitution work will progress grandly to its glorious consummation.

There will be sweeping moral reforms, great educational and philanthropic enterprises, wonderful cures from every disease and deformity, mental and physical. There will be awakenings also from death, and a grand reorganisation of society under the new order of the Kingdom of God. And all the world's bitter experience during the 6000 years past will prove valuable lessons on the exceeding sinfulness of sin; helping them to appreciate the new rule of righteousness, and to live in everlasting conformity to the perfect will of God, and thus to accept God's gift of everlasting life, designed for all who will receive it on His conditions of love and loyalty and obedience to Him. Then, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17.

Such being the grand object of our Lord's return and the establishment of His Kingdom, we believe with the prophet, that it will be "The desire of all nations," and with the apostle that the earnest expectation of the creature longs, though ignorantly, for the coming revelation of the sons of God—the overcoming Church exalted with her Lord.

The Church's Hope.

A clearer knowledge of the world's hope should and does increase the Church's appreciation of God's loving arrangement for His creatures. And it adds new lustre to the Church's hope when we realise that the glorious object of the call and discipline of the Church in this Gospel age is for the development of characters which, being proved loyal to God and to righteousness and truth, will be associated with Christ, in the Messianic age now dawning, in the great and grand work of uplifting whosoever will of men, from ignorance and sin and degradation to God's likeness and favour and love.

The apostle declares "He that hath this hope in

him purifieth himself." (1 John 3:3.) It is a hope that helps onward to God and holiness.

Partial List of Scriptures which we Understand to Teach "Restitution of All Things."

Acts 3:19-21.—Note that the inspired Apostle declares that all God's holy prophets spoke of these times (vss. 21, 24). We should therefore expect to find something concerning restitution in the writings of each prophet of the Old Testament.

Gen. 12:2, 3; 18:18; 22:17, 18.—All the families of the earth are here mentioned as beneficiaries. Observe that St. Paul explains that the Seed which will confer the blessing is Christ and His Church (the mystical body of which Jesus is the Head).—Gal. 3:16, 29; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 1:22, 23.

Leviticus 25:10.—Israel's Jubilee was a type or shadow, the substance of which shall be realised in the world-wide restitution which will follow the establishment of God's Kingdom at the second advent of our Lord Jesus.—Heb. 10:1.

Deut. 18:15, 18, 19.—So applied by St. Peter.—Acts 3:22.

1 Kings 17:22.—This restoration of life was a foreshadowing of the great times of restitution.—Isa. 25:6-9.

2 Kings 4:33-36.—A figure, as the preceding.

Psa. 46:9, 10; 72:1, 7-15; 96:10-13; 98:4, 9.

Isa. 35:10.—That we may know positively who are to be the blessed ones, who shall enjoy the privilege of restitution by return to harmony with God, compare the words, "ransomed of the Lord" (vs. 10) with 1 Tim. 2:6, "a ransom for all."

Jer. 30:18; 31:8, 9.—For comments on these words promising a restitution blessing, see Rom. 11:12, 15.

Jer. 31:29, 30, 34.—Compare Rom. 5:12; John 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:4.

Ezekiel 16:44-63.—God saw fit (vs. 50) to slay the Sodomites; yet our Lord Jesus said (Matt. 11:23) that they would have repented under such a ministry as had been granted to Capernaum, which repented not. Does not this course on God's part indicate that, since He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and since it is His will that all shall come to a knowledge of the truth, the death-imprisoned Sodomites shall be brought forth (John 5:29) to their "former estate" (Ezek. 16:55), and "in that day" be given an opportunity to believe in the "only name given under heaven or among men, whereby we must be saved?" (Acts 4:12.) Our Lord's declaration that it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for some who heard and rejected Him, implies that that time will be tolerable for all in proportion as their sins had been sins of ignorance. (Matt. 11:24; Luke 12:47, 48.) And it would be difficult to foretell the restitution of the Sodomites more clearly and more definitely than is done in this chapter. And in selecting so extreme an example of clemency our Lord evidently intended that we should see that the sacrifice which He gave was unquestionably "a ransom for all."

Daniel 2:44, 7:13, 14, 27.—This is a prophecy of restitution. Because any prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ and His saints is a prophecy of restitution; for the Kingdom is to be set up at the second advent of our Lord Jesus, "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things."—Acts 3:21.

Hosea 6:1-3.—Joel 2:32; 3:1, 2, 17, 18.

Amos 9:11-13.—For inspired comment on this prophecy of restitution see Acts 15:13-18. The words of this apostle agree with those of Paul (Rom. 11), for he says that this blessing is to be brought to Israel in order that the rest of "men might seek after the Lord."

Obadiah 17, 21.

Jonah 3:10; 4:11.—Compare Matt. 12:41.

Micah 4:1-4.—Compare Isa. 2:2-4.

Nahum 1:15.—Compare Isa. 52:7.

Hab: 2:14.—Zeph. 3:9.—Haggai 2:6, 7.—Zech. 8:20-23.

Malachi 4:2.—Compare also Psalms 30:5; Matthew 13:43.

Matt. 25:31-46.—It should be noted that when the Lord occupies His throne, the Church reigns with Him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4) Christ will not reign over His glorified Church nor the members of His glorified Church reign over each other, but the Church complete will reign over all nations, dead and living (Rom. 14:9), else their title "Seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29) is a misnomer.

Luke 2:10, 30-32.

John 3:17; 5:25-30.—Observe that our Lord's words in verse 30 indicate that the destiny of those who come up to judgment (vs. 29, R.V.) is not fixed beforehand. Testimony is to be taken, and "as I hear, I judge." And all this therefore refers to the "times of restitution."

John 17:9, 20, 21, 23.—Our Lord's last prayer was not on behalf of the world, but on behalf of His disciples and those who should be delivered through their word, and His prayer for the whole Church was made that the whole world might afterward have the opportunity to "believe and know that thou hast sent me;"—in the times of restitution.

Rom. 5:18, 19; 8:19-22.

1 Cor. 15:21-23.—Note here that the expression "they who are Christ's at his coming (parousia, presence)" evidently does not refer to the Church, for they are Christ's before His second advent, and with Him constitute the first-fruits first mentioned.

(Note also James 1:18.) "They who are Christ's at his coming"—during His presence—during His Millennial reign, evidently refers to "all them that believe in that day,"—the day of Christ, the times of restitution.—2 Thess. 1:10.

2 Cor. 5:19-6:2.—Some think that 2 Cor. 6:2 teaches that there will be no opportunity to exercise faith and repentance in the Millennial age, but a careful reading of Isa. 49:8-10, from which it is quoted, indicates that the body of Christ is helped and succoured in its day of salvation, in order that it may be the instrument of God for the blessing and releasing of those who are in the prison-house of death. Here also restitution is taught.

Gal. 3:8.—Eph. 1:10.—Phil. 2:9-11.—Col. 1:20.

Titus 2:13—A "blessed hope," truly, when we realise that the event for which we hope is to usher in the "times of restitution"

Heb. 6:13, 14; 8:11.

1 Pet. 2:9—Since the Church is to be a royal priesthood, there will doubtless be some for whom they will perform the priestly offices; and for whom, if not for the world of mankind, ransomed by the great High Priest and His "better sacrifices?"

Jude 14.—A prophecy of restitution, by Enoch, who "pleased God."

Rev. 20:11; 22:1, 17; 20:12.—All the events here mentioned, including the invitation to "whosoever will," are to be fulfilled after the second advent of Christ, after the Church has become the "Bride, the Lamb's wife," after the establishment of His Kingdom.

Berean Questions.

1. What is the cause of all earth's sorrow and trouble?

Answer.—Rom. 5:12; Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 2:9; Rom. 3:10-12; Isa. 1:4-7, 19, 20.

2. Can mankind remove the cause and remedy the evil?

Answer.—Rom. 3:19-28; Psal. 49:7, Rom. 5:6.

3. Has God promised to do so

Answer.—Gen. 12:3; Isa. 25:6-9; Luke 2:10-14, 30-32; Isa. 35:10; Rev. 21:4; Acts 3:21. Others too numerous to mention.

4. Through whom, how, and when?

Answer.—Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; Rom. 3:23-26; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:21; Acts 17:31; Psalms 22:27, 28; Rev. 22:17.

5. Will the world be justified by faith like the saints of the Gospel age have been, or how will they be justified "in that day?"

Answer.—Rev. 20:12; Matt. 16:27; Isa. 35:8-10; John 5:25. They that hear [obey] shall live. Compare Acts 3:23; Jer. 31:28-34; Isa. 1:19, 20; Isa. 9:6, 7.

6. How will that kingdom operate? Will the people be able to choose whether or not they will be righteous and obedient?

Answer.—Psalms 72:1-9; Rev. 2:26, 27; Psalms 45:3-6; Phil. 2:10; Isa. 45:23-25.

7. Who are the princes that will rule in justice (Isa. 32:1)?

Answer.—Obad. 21; Rev. 2:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 8:17; James 2:5.

8. Was this class individually predestinated?

Answer.—No; but it was predestinated that there should be such a class, and that their characters should all be copies of God's dear Son. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4-6.

9. Were there any members of the Church prior to Pentecost?

Answer.—Luke 16:16; Col. 1:18.

10. Did Abraham, Moses, Job, Daniel, and others expect to go to heaven? Quote any texts in the Old Testament offering a heavenly reward to any at that time.

Answer.—No. Heb. 11:39, 40; Job 19:26; Matt. 11:

11. No text can be found offering spiritual promises prior to John the Baptist.

11. Are there any earthly promises in the New Testament for the Church?

Answer.—John 15:18-21; John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; John 14:2, 3; Eph. 1:3-5, 18-20.

12. What parable indicates that there would be an interval (the Gospel age) during which time the Church would be developed by experiences, etc.?

Answer.—Luke 19.11-17.

13. Did the Bible foretell the apostasy

Answer.—Yes. 2 Thess. 2:3-7; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:1; Matt. 24:5-12; Dan. 7:24, 25; Rev. 13:4-8.

14. Where is the one true Church, the Bride of Christ?

Answer.—John 4:23, 24; Matt. 18:20; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Cor. 11:2.

15. How did the Church leave her first love?

Answer.—Rev. 2:4; Rev. 18:7; Dan. 11:34; Col. 2:8, 18, 19.

16. Who is "the prince in this world" responsible for the confusion of doctrine and the Church creeds?

Answer.—John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:13, 5.

"And still new beauties shall we see,
And still increasing light."

STUDY XIV.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GREAT REFORMATION.

**Stand Fast in the Liberty of Christ.
The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints.**

The underlying principle of the Great Reformation, to which all Protestants look back with pride, was the right of individual judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures,—in opposition to the papal dogma of submission to clerical authority and interpretation. On this very point was the whole issue of the great movement. It was a grand and blessed strike for liberty of conscience, for an open Bible, and the right to believe and obey its teachings regardless of the usurped authority and vain traditions of the self-exalted clergy of Rome. Had not this principle been firmly held by the early reformers, they never could have effected a reformation, and the wheels of progress would have continued to stick in the mire of papal traditions and perverted interpretation. The danger, now, is that the same influences threaten to bind Protestants as securely as Romanists are bound, to the judgment and religious decrees of a system, instead of leaving faith to the intelligence, study and judgment of each individual.

The foundation of the great papal apostasy was laid in the separation of a class, called the "clergy," from the church of believers in general, who, in contradistinction, came to be known as the "laity." This was not done in a day, but gradually. Those who had been chosen from their own number, by the various congregations to minister to, or serve them in spiritual things, gradually came to con-

sider themselves a superior order, or class, above their tellow-Christians who elected them. They gradually came to regard their position as an office rather than a service, and sought each other's companionship in councils, etc., as "clergymen," and order, or rank among them followed.

Next they felt it beneath their dignity to be elected by the congregation they were to serve, and to be installed by it as its servants; and to carry out the idea of office and to support the dignity of a "clergyman," they deemed it better policy to abandon the primitive method by which any believer who had the ability had the liberty to teach; and decided that no man could minister to a congregation except a "clergyman," and that no one could become a clergyman except the clergy so decided and installed him in office.

Their councils, at first harmless, if not profitable, began gradually to suggest what each individual should believe; and came finally to decreeing what should be considered orthodox and what should be considered heretical,—or, in other words, deciding what each individual must believe. There the right of private judgment by individual Christians was trampled upon, the "clergy" were put in power as the only and official interpreters of God's Word, and the consciences of the "laity" were led into captivity to those errors of doctrine which evil-minded, ambitious, scheming, and often self-deluded men among the clergy were able to stablish and falsely label truth. And having thus, gradually and cunningly, secured control of the Church's conscience, as the apostles had foretold, they "privily brought in damnable heresies," and palmed them off upon the conscience-fettered laity as truths.—2 Pet. 2:1.

One result was, that the Bible took second place to the opinions of the clergy in these councils,

thus discounting the value of the only true standard of faith. Another result was, that this self-exalted clergy, becoming more and more vain and boastful, finally concluded that they alone constituted the Church, and that the laity bore to the clergy the relationship of children,—“children of the Church;” and were not to be classed as joint-heirs with the clergy, to the promises of coming glory and honour and association with Christ in the Millennial reign.

When the Roman empire was falling into ruins, these clerical schemers, by multitudinous crafty arts and intrigues, too numerous here to be detailed, contrived to work their own advancement to political power and influence; until, as the great papal hierarchy, they gained the rulership of the world, electing one of their number king of kings and lord of lords—the pope. Thereafter the church, instead of being “subject to the powers that be,” assumed and used power over the world and demanded universal obedience. Instead of suffering at the hands of the ungodly, this corrupt church reigned; instead of being persecuted for righteousness’ sake, she was flattered and honoured, and became the persecutor of all who differed from her, and, rejecting the decrees of her councils, exercised their right of private judgment in the study of the Bible.

To account for this changed condition of things, the claim was then made that the doctrine that Christ would come and set up His Millennial Kingdom and subdue all things to His rule of righteousness, as taught by the apostles and held by Christians in the first and second centuries, had been misunderstood. The claim was set forth that those Scriptures which referred to the Millennial blessedness and reign of Christ and the Church, as kings and priests to rule and teach and bless the world,

were to be fulfilled by the Church without the second coming of Christ Jesus, her Lord and Head; that He was represented in reign and glory and power by the successive popes who claimed to be His vicars or representatives, and as such to be infallible, as Christ would be.

This claimed Millennial reign is dated from about A.D. 800, and since then, the line of popes, in Christ's name and stead, have applied to themselves all the titles, promises and predictions of Scripture which relate to Christ and his Millennial glory. And thus the popes, falsely representing Christ, the Head, and the general clergy, falsely representing the Body, Bride or Church of Christ, became the Antichrist, or false Christ over the false kingdom, predicted by Daniel, Paul and John, as well by our Lord and others.

This counterfeit of Christ's Millennial Kingdom could not indeed resurrect the dead to glory, power and immortality, as the Scriptures predict (1 Cor. 15:42-44; Rev. 20:6), to live and reign on earth; but as a pope could represent Christ, so bishops, cardinals, etc., could represent saints of the first resurrection; and though these could not possess the power, glory, etc., promised to all who will have part in the first resurrection, and share in Christ's Millennial reign, nevertheless those glories could be and were counterfeited or represented, in the clothing, etc., of the hierarchical class. The master-artists of the world were engaged to paint and gild and bestud with blazing precious stones the papal throne, and so to arrange windows and mirrors, lights and shadows, etc., that, on certain occasions, as nearly as possible a supernatural radiance might seem to the people to emanate from the person of the pope, as, clad in gorgeous clothing and flashing with jewels, he sat in regal state, the false head of the apostate church, personating and counterfeit-

ing the true Head of the true Church and His Millennial power and glory.

The Great Reformation.

The terrible state of ignorance, superstition and priestcraft, which prevailed for centuries under this counterfeit kingdom of Christ, known in history as "the dark ages," was broken by the Great Reformation movement of the sixteenth century,—when Luther and his coadjutors, recognising the true character of the Papacy's kingdom, in sermons and tracts and posters, boldly denounced and exposed the counterfeit, and pointed out some of the errors and blasphemies of that deceptive system.

Luther noted, too, that the start of the great apostasy was in the error that the clergy were a divinely appointed order, distinct and separate from the remainder of the church. He saw that the reign of Christ was not fulfilled by Papacy, and that the promises, that those who suffer with Christ shall reign with Him, were not made to a clerical class, but to all the consecrated, faithful Church of Christ. Did space permit, we would give samples of some of Luther's forcible utterances on this subject, which show that he had a very clear idea of the relationship which should exist between the Church in general and those who minister to or serve it; even though he found it impossible to bring his ideas fully into practice, owing to the gross darkness and superstition of the long priest-ridden people. He clearly points out Peter's words, "Ye are a royal priesthood," as relating to the general Church, and not to a clerical class, and denounces the assumptions of the Papacy on this subject, although he himself had been one of the favoured "clergy" class.

True. Papacy does not now attempt a despotic sway of the world, nor does she as loudly and pub-

licly as formerly assert her claim to divine authority as God's Kingdom among men. This, she is crafty enough to see, would not be wise policy in this twentieth century and under present circumstances. Hence, Romanists do not now make these doctrines prominent; but their theological works do present such views, unblushingly; and Papacy's boast is, that she never changes. The same claims to divine authority to rule the world and to punish and torture in the present life and to damn to all eternity, as heretics, all who will not accept her claims and obey her "royal priesthood," would soon be heard again, were ignorance and superstition again to thoroughly enslave the masses.

Now, while cunningly avoiding the question of civil power over the world, she retains her grip upon the minds and consciences of her people, by proclaiming her chief cleric, the pope, infallible; and by having him loudly assert his spiritual power (?) and influence, to compensate for his loss of earthly power. Thus, to display his spiritual authority and power, Pope Leo XIII. announced the liberation of millions of souls from the pains of purgatory, with as much apparent candour as President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation which set free millions of souls in the South. And, strange to say, the masses of Romanists, even to-day, believe this monstrous wholesale fraud.

The Protestant Clergy.

Protestants, with few exceptions, admit the fallacy of these claims of Papacy. And yet the habit of centuries of regard for certain forms and ceremonies and for a certain class of self-exalted fellow-mortals, called the clergy, still clings to the people,—and, consequently, the Protestant clergy

receive much of the same homage and reverence against which the reformers of the sixteenth century protested.

Nor can we wonder much that even some very earnest, honest ministers accept this customary submission and reverence of the people, and the title reverend, and that superstitious respect which looks up to them as possessed of almost super-human authority as religious leaders. It is a general weakness of the fallen human nature to take all the respect, honour and authority others are willing to accord. And then, too, many ministers have become possessed of the same ideas, and really believe themselves to be worthy of homage and reverence. Many get the old papal idea that the ruling and teaching of the Church belong to the "clergy" by divine arrangement. We all know how much easier it is to "receive honour one of another" (John 5:44), than to refuse it, and tell the people the plain truth which Peter so clearly enunciated (1 Pet. 2:9), that the entire Church of Christ—that is, all fully consecrated and self-sacrificing believers—constitute the royal priesthood, and not a self-appointed lordly class in it or above it, calling itself the clergy.

But as for a clerical class, God does not recognise it as His elect teachers; nor has He chosen many of His teachers from its ranks. The mere claim of any man to be a teacher is no proof that he is one by divine appointment. That false teachers would arise in the Church, who would pervert the truth, was foretold. The Church, therefore, is not to blindly accept whatever any teacher may set forth, but should prove the teaching of those whom they have reason to believe to be God's messengers by the one infallible standard—the Word of God. "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

(Isa. 8:20.) Thus, while the Church needs teachers, and cannot understand God's Word without them, yet the Church individually—each by himself and for himself, and himself only—must fill the important office of judge, to decide, according to the infallible standard, God's Word, whether the teaching be true or false, and whether the claimed teacher is a true teacher by divine appointment.

God Himself provides these teachers; they are His gifts to the Church.—1 Cor. 12:28.

Any superior wisdom and ability granted such is as much for the sake and for the good of the other members of Christ's Church as for themselves. And whichever of God's children comes to see some important truth generally disregarded by the Church and finds himself possessed of ability to make it clear to others, should do so, should teach it, to whomsoever has an ear to hear. If a new truth, it belongs to the entire household, and he who keeps it from them, for any cause, defrauds the family of God, misuses a great favour, and deprives himself of a ministry (service).

Notice, that the self-constituted "clergy" are not teachers, and do not and cannot appoint teachers; nor can they in any degree qualify them. Our Lord Jesus keeps that part in His own power, and the so-called clergy have nothing to do with it, fortunately, else there never would be any teachers;—for the "clergy" both Papal and Protestant, strive constantly to prevent any change from those conditions of thought and ruts of misbelief, in which each sect has settled down. By their course of action they say, Bring us no new unfoldings of truth, however beautiful; and do not disturb the heaps of rubbish and human tradition we call our creeds, by digging down through them and bringing forth the Old Theology of the Lord and the apostles, to contradict us and to disturb our schemes and plans

and methods. Let us alone! If you go poking into our old musty creeds, which our people so devoutly and ignorantly reverence and respect, you will stir up a stench such as even we could not endure; then, too, it will make us appear both small and foolish, and as not half earning our salaries and not half deserving the reverence we now enjoy. Let us alone! is the cry of the "clergy" as a whole, even if a few may be found to dissent from it and to seek for and speak out the truth at any cost. And this cry of the "clergy" is joined in by a large sectarian following.

We exhort all of God's true Church—the one Church, which includes all consecrated believers—to awake to the principles of the Reformation, to a recognition of the right of individual judgment upon religious questions. Demand Scriptural proofs for all you are asked to believe; take neither the decisions of Rome, nor those of Westminster, nor those of any smaller councils or synods, as final settlements of the question, "What is truth?" And be sure that you believe and confess nothing that you do not understand fully and clearly. To subscribe to, or confess, what you do not understand, and therefore cannot truly believe, is solemn lying in the presence of God and witnesses: no matter if it be true that others, by the hundred, have done the same before you. If you did this once, thoughtlessly, even though it were years ago, in joining a sect, now that your attention is called to it, you are bound to procure a copy of the "Covenant," or "Articles of Faith," the belief of which you confessed publicly, and after careful, prayerful study of it, if you find that you do not so believe, you will be bound to deny it as publicly as you confessed it, or else forfeit all claim to honesty.

Require of all who shall attempt to teach in the name of the Lord the exact words of the Lord or

the apostle which they claim support their teaching. Get the chapter and verse and look the matter up for yourselves, critically examining the text and the context. Weigh and test every item of teaching which you receive as your faith, regardless of how much you esteem the person who presents it. We know that no fellow-mortal is infallible, and that God's Word is the only standard by which He wishes us to square and measure and build up our faith.

When you come to apply this rule you will be greatly surprised. You will find that many errors of doctrine, as well as of custom, have been carried over from Romanism into Protestantism. Many doctrines expressed in the catechisms and confessions of faith and in the hymn books and from the various pulpits, you will find no foundation for in the Bible; and many prominent in the Bible you will find are ignored by one or another, and some of them by all the sects of Christendom. But hold fast to God's Word. Let God be true, if it should make every man a liar.—Rom. 3:4.

What is the Object?

The object of Rome in establishing a clerical class, as separate from what she terms the laity, was to gain and to hold full control of the people. Every one admitted to the Romish clergy is bound by vows to submit implicitly to the head of that system, doctrinally and in every way. Not only is such an one held fast to those doctrines and hindered from progress by the strong chain of his vow, but also by innumerable smaller ones—his living, his dignity of position, his title, and his hope of advancement in the same direction; the opinions of his friends, their pride for him, and the fact that should he ever confess to greater light and renounce his position, he would, instead of being honoured

as an honest thinker, be maligned, despised and misrepresented. In a word, he would be treated as though to search the Scriptures and to think for himself and exercise the liberty wherewith Christ made all His followers free were the unpardonable sin. And as such he would be treated as an excommunicated person,—cut off from the church, now and to all eternity.

This clergy class, being thus bound hand and foot to the system, are so many live, active agents of the system in binding the people to it; and sectarian pride and rivalry and reverence for the clergy, and an indefinable fear of the future, begotten of ignorance of God's Word and fostered by the arts of priestcraft and superstition, are the cords by which the clergy of Rome bind the people to that great Antichrist system. Nor can it be denied that the Protestant clergy, though in advance of that of Rome, have the same object and many of the same methods,—each clergyman being expected to exercise tact and wisdom and to act according to the intellectual status of the people with whom he has to deal.

What are Some of the Methods?

Rome's method has been to concentrate authority and power in the hands of her priesthood, or clergy. Not only are they supposed to have power in their hands to shut or open heaven or hell to whom they please, but even in the present life their authority is impressed. Roman Catholics are expected to address their clergy, "Your Reverence," and to treat them as vastly their superiors in every respect—as holy men, whom to offend might jeopardise their interests throughout eternity.

They are taught that every infant must be baptised, every marriage performed, and every funeral

service conducted, by a clergyman; and that for any one except a clergyman to administer the simple elements of the Lord's Memorial Supper would be sacrilegious and profane. All of these things are so many more cords to bind the people to reverence and subjection, under the clergy, who, by reason of the claim that they have special rights above other Christians, are caused to appear to be a special class in God's estimation. And these cords and inferences are applied by Protestants as well as by Roman Catholics.

The truth, on the contrary, is that no such clerical office or rights are established in the Scriptures. These simple offices are services, which any brother in Christ may do for another.

We challenge anyone to produce a solitary passage of Scripture giving one member of the Church of Christ more liberty or authority than another in these respects. In fact, in the matter of baptism, the true idea of the general priesthood of all Christ's followers is tacitly admitted by the "clergy"—though in a rather pinched manner, it is true—for the regulations of various denominations provide that in the case of any unbaptised person about to die, and desiring baptism, or in the case of any infant about to die, if no clergyman can be found in time, any layman may perform the service. With some, in such a case when death does not ensue a sanctioning by a cleric is required to follow to make it valid. And the only reason why the clergy yielded this privilege to the laity was, that having taught the people that sprinkling is necessary to salvation from eternal torment, it became necessary to grant the laity this privilege, in order to keep the people from reasoning too carefully upon the matter; lest they should thus force the subservient laity to exercise common sense and reject the absurd idea that a few drops of water and a

few mumbled words could prove a charm to procure God's interest in the dying one, and to cause Him to change His purpose and not to consign him to an eternity of torture.*

It is true that the more advanced, both of clergy and laity, are becoming too intelligent to attach such an awful importance to baby-sprinkling; and in proportion as they do, the emergency in which the laity may be permitted to officiate is lost sight of, so that to-day few of them know that so great a privilege was ever conferred upon them by the clergy, though the rules still permit the laity to use it.

But, notwithstanding the fact that the teaching that there are unbaptised infants in hell not a span long, is no longer heard from the pulpit, and would no longer be tolerated in civilised lands; yet there is in almost every mother's head a caution, and in her heart a love and a fear for her child's eternal welfare, which leads her to have it sprinkled as a precaution. Indeed, one case came under our notice, not long since, which shows that the papal error, both on baptism and on the authority of the clergy, has a very strong hold yet, even in this land of liberty and general intelligence. The case was that of a man and his wife who had been members of a Lutheran church, but who, through irregularity of payment of church dues, had fallen under the displeasure of the clergyman there officiating. One of their children took sick and was about to die; and as it had never been sprinkled, the parents were in great distress; and conquering his pride for the sake of his child's eternal welfare, the father went time and again, and finally accompanied by his sick and weeping wife, to entreat the clergyman to come and save the child by baptising

*The Scriptural teaching respecting hell and baptism will be sent to any applicant.

it; but he refused to come, telling them that it was what their conduct deserved; and possibly he superstitiously believed that these parents being no longer in good and regular standing in his church, the child must be counted as a child of unbelieving parents which could not be brought to God's favour even by the sprinkling of water. But no matter what we should say about the efficacy or non-efficacy of the drops of water, the incident shows the power of the clergy and the authority they are supposed to have, even among Protestants.

The Roman Catholic clergy add other cords to bind the people, such as the "Confessional," the use of "holy candles," "holy water," "holy burying grounds," etc., which the greater intelligence of Protestants would not generally submit to, though High Church Episcopalians have lately adopted them.

Order Among the Royal Priests.

But in showing that the Scriptures recognise no separate class, but that the entire consecrated Church of Christ is the Priesthood, and that they each and all have the same authority to do anything that the Lord and the apostles enjoined, as they find they have the ability, let no one suppose we urge disorder. It is proper that each congregation should select, or elect some of their number, best qualified, for these services. But it should always be remembered that the one who thus serves belongs to no higher class or caste than his brethren who chose him to thus minister or serve. "All ye are brethren, and one is your Master." Such a servant of the Church is no more reverend or sacred than others, though if he be a very faithful and Christ-like servant he should be esteemed very highly "for his work's sake," because of loving, faithful service, but for no other reason. (1 Thess. 5:13.) He is not a "clergyman" in God's sight;

for God recognises no such class, and His Word authorises no such distinction.

Whatever "authority" such a minister, or servant of the Church possesses, is given him; he possesses no more "authority" than the humblest of his "brethren," the entire Church, any of whom has the authority of God's Word (Matt. 28:19, 20) to declare and to do any or every thing which it enjoins, according to his talents and opportunities and the desires of his fellow-believers to be served by him. Authority to preach or otherwise minister cannot, therefore, be given by other ministers, or by conferences, synods, etc. Each royal priest is the peer of each other one in authority and dignity of priesthood, though in talents, intelligence, etc., and, therefore, in fitness, they are not all equals. The choice of one or more to specially represent and serve all, as ministers, implies, or should imply, that those so chosen have some qualifications for such service superior to others, which should be willingly and freely used for the service and benefit of all.

The tendency of intelligence has been gradually toward the recognition of this common priesthood of the Church. "Baptists," "Congregationalists," and "Disciples" have recognised it more fully and more clearly than others; though some other denominations have been gradually forced by growing intelligence to permit what they term "lay-representation" at conferences, etc., but in such a manner as to make the laity feel that between them and the clergy there is a great gulf fixed.

While glad to acknowledge that Baptists, Congregationalists and Disciples approach the true idea, that the entire Church is the royal priesthood, and that each congregation stands independent of the jurisdiction and authority of all others, yet we beg them to consider that their theory is not fully

carried out; and, still worse, that the tendency among them is backward toward centralisation, clericism, denominationalism; and far worse still, that the people "love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31), and take pride in their growing denominational strength, which means their growing loss of individual freedom.

It is only of late that these last-mentioned could be called sects or denominations. Formerly each congregation stood independent, like the churches of the apostles' times, and would have resented any attempt on the part of other congregations to dictate regulations or faith; and would have scorned to be known as in any sense bound into a sect or denomination. But the example of others, and pride to be parts or members of a large and influential band of churches known by one name, and all confessing to one faith, and ruled over by a council of ministers resembling the assemblies and conferences and councils of other denominations, has led these generally into similar bondage. But above all other influences leading them backward to bondage has been the false idea concerning the authority of the clergy. The people, not Scripturally informed on the subject, are swayed much by the customs and forms of others. Their unlearned "clergymen" follow carefully and scrupulously every form and ceremony and detail suggested by their more learned clerical brethren, lest they should be thought "irregular." And their more learned clergymen are shrewd enough to see how they can take advantage of the ignorance of the others to gradually create a denominational power in which they shall be able to shine as chief lights. First, it is suggested that certain doctrines or customs are not according to Baptist or Congregational usage, and the next step is to boycott such a congregation or minister as does not harmonise with

the general association, by dropping it or him from representation in the association. This is regarded as a punishment and disgrace, and most congregations and ministers will submit rather than incur it; whereas the fact is, that there should be no such association formed. Each individual and congregation should stand free.

A Warning to Protestants.

A careful survey and study of the field will show that the spirit of reform on this subject of clerical authority, which was in progress for some time, has really ceased: present movements are backward, toward the assumption of greater authority on the part of the clergy. The reason for this retrogression lies in the fact that the spirit of freedom and independence in religious thought, on the part of the masses of professed Christians, is being swallowed up by worldliness, and money-getting, and pleasure-seeking; consequently, they have neither time nor desire for matters of faith and doctrine, and permit themselves to be tightly bridled by the clergy.

This decline in individual liberty and equality is regarded by the "clergy" as desirable, as a supposed necessity, because here and there in their congregations are a few "peculiar people," who partially appreciate their rights and liberties, and who are growing both in grace and in knowledge beyond the clergy. These are causing trouble to the creed-bound clergy by questioning doctrines long unquestioned, and by demanding reasons and Scriptural proofs. Since they cannot be answered Scripturally or reasonably, the only way to meet them and to settle them is by brow-beating, and a show or claim of clerical authority and superiority, which holds itself bound to account in doctrinal matters only to fellow-clergymen and not to laymen.

But some in the pews are to-day as well or better educated than the occupant of the pulpit, and it will no longer do to claim that the laity are so ignorant that they cannot comprehend; and the people have learned that the big words of technical, clerical phraseology are used to hide, and not to teach the truth. Hence the individual and educational superiority of the clergy can no longer be given as an excuse for arbitrary definitions of Scriptural statements and doctrines.

The Doctrine of "Apostolic Succession."

The claim that the laying on of the hands of a bishop conveys to a man an ability to teach and expound the Scriptures still holds. Romanists and Episcopalians, who fail to see that the very men thus said to be qualified to teach are among the least able; none of them indeed seem to be any more able either to comprehend or to teach the Scriptures than before being thus authorised; and many certainly are decidedly injured by the arrogance, self-conceit and assumed authority to lord it over their brethren, which seem to be the only things they do receive from the "holy hands." However, Catholics and Episcopalians are making the most of this Papal error, and are more successful in smothering the spirit of inquiry than others.

Recently, in view of the growing intelligence of the people, the tendency among the clergymen is to disclaim personal superiority or authority and to place the authority in the hands of conferences, synods, etc. Some ministers even disclaim any responsibility for their doctrinal faith, placing the whole responsibility for what they teach upon these councils. Some even admit that their personal views differ from those they preach, and are endeavouring to have their conferences and synods allow them to preach what they conceive to be

truth and to desist from preaching what they believe to be error. Dishonourable, ignoble, hypocritical and slavish though such a course is, yet it is the natural result of the false view of the "call" and "authority" of the ministers of Christ. If "called" to the ministry, and granted "authority to preach," and "supported" by and according to the rulings of a conference or synod, what is more reasonable than to look to such bodies for doctrines also; for each denomination grants "authority" to preach its doctrines only. How needful, then, that all should recognise only the authority of God's Word and go to it for the doctrines it authorises.

The tendency of Protestants in this respect is to follow the method and practice of Rome. With Papacy, the councils declare the doctrines to be believed; and the people, denied the right of private judgment, are required to believe whatever these councils decree to be the truth. The same tendency is observable in all denominations of Protestantism; and we predict what is even now suggested by prominent Protestant clergymen, that ere long Protestants will unite in a general council which will decree and settle what shall, and what shall not, be received as divine truth.

In view of these facts and tendencies, we sound an alarm to all who hold to the original doctrine of the Reformation—the right of individual judgment. We cannot hope to stem the current and to prevent what is coming; but we can, by the grace of God, imparted through His truth, be overcomers and get the victory over these errors (Rev. 20:4, 6), and as "overcomers" be granted a place in the glorified priesthood of the incoming Millennial age.—See Rev. 1:6; 5:10.

Demand a "Thus saith the Lord" for all you accept as your faith.—Isa. 8:20.

Berean Questions.

1. Do the Scriptures encourage individual judgment in regard to its interpretation?

Answer.—1 Thess. 5:21; Gal. 6:6; Acts 17:2, 11; Isa. 1:18; Isa. 8:20; Col. 2:6-8, 16-19; Gal. 5:1.

2. What are the fundamental doctrines of Christian fellowship Has any sect or party the right to add to these?

Answer.—(a) Acts 4:10-12; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 4:4-6; Rom. 6:3. (b) 2 John 7:9, 11; 1 John 2:22-24; 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9.

3. Is it right for any to exercise lordship or authority over the Church?

Answer.—Matt. 23:8-12; Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; 1 Pet. 5:3.

4. How do we recognise a teacher sent by God?

Answer.—Matt. 7:20; Isa. 8:20; Deut. 18:22; 1 Thess. 2:4-12; 1 Pet. 5:2.

5. What conditions have been brought about by the assumption of lordship?

Answer.—2 Pet. 2:1-3; 3 John 9; 2 Thess. 2:3-7; 1 Cor. 1:10-12.

6. What constitutes the true Church?

Answer.—Col. 1:18, 24; Rom. 12:4, 5; Heb. 12:23; Col. 4:15; Matt. 18:19, 20; 1 Cor. 12:12-14.

7. How are the members of the true Church prepared for their position as joint-heirs with Christ?

Answer.—Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7; 1 Pet. 2:19-21; 1 Pet. 4:12, 13; Heb. 12:5-11.

8. Should we accept any doctrine or teaching without understanding it?

Answer.—2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 John 10, 11.

9. Is the doctrine of Apostolic Succession Scriptural?

Answer.—Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14; Rev. 2:2; Eph. 3:5.

"Sing, oh sing, ye heirs of glory,

Shout the tidings as you go!

Publish wide redemption's story—

"All its healing balm should know."

STUDY XV.

HAS CHRISTENDOM LOST CHRIST?

What is the occasion for such a question? First, however, let us ask: What is Christendom?

The Standard Dictionary describes Christendom as "the Christian world." We therefore look out upon those parts of the world which profess to be Christian nations, such as England, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, France, America, Australia, etc., and note the conditions. We ask what evidence is there that Christ controls these people? Are the conditions such as He would approve? What is the predominant spirit in what we term Christendom? Is it the spirit of the Master such as gentleness, meekness, patience, forbearance, love? Is it the spirit of sacrifice for the good of others? Is it the spirit of goodwill to all men, or the spirit of goodwill to all, even in Christian lands?

Rather is it not the spirit of the great adversaary, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), which is envy, malice, hatred, jealousy, covetousness, greed, murder.

Let us examine a little closer, however, for we shall agree that the nations generally called Christian are not really so. But what of the churches throughout Christendom? Are not these truly Christian? Is not Christ the ruling power here? Is not His spirit manifest in our churches?

Christ's spirit is a spirit of unity and co-operation, of love and sacrifice of personal rights and privileges for the good of others, and for the cause of the Gospel; the spirit that would rejoice in the proclamation of the Gospel to the glory of God and

good of mankind, no matter who the instrument may be. Alas! we do not see this spirit operating in the present day systems of religion. The churches all have their own ways, follow their own thoughts, seek their own gain, and are jealous of others encroaching upon their particular fields of labour.

If there were unity of doctrine and practice, the prevalence of Christian spirit, there would not be the need of half the church buildings to accommodate the present church-going community. We see the divided condition of churchianity, some pulling one way, some another; some teaching one thing, some another. Such divided forces, such lack of organisation for the common good surely cannot be the Lord's arrangement. Can we for a moment think that Christ is the ruling power, and responsible for such conditions? Is this truly the Christian Church for which Christ asked the Father that they might be one, even as He and the Father were one?

We would come closer and examine the various sects and parties of Christendom, and search for Christ and His spirit. We might enquire of the Roman Catholic Church, with its forms and superstitions; of the Church of England, with its sacerdotalism instead of truth and sanctification; and the various other sects, some with less of one error, but more of another, but all so confused in doctrine that the members have no clear conception even as to the necessity of the cross of Christ, or how it operates to free from the condemnation that rests on man. They have no definite hopes as to the future state, in fact, no clear conception of anything concerning the great plan of salvation, or God's purpose for the world, or His great reward for those who are privileged to run for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

While in the Protestant churches there is some liberty of thought, a little less superstition and more knowledge of the Word, the difference is small, for the same spirit operates throughout both the mother church and the daughter churches. Worldliness has taken hold completely and we find the description given in 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Does this condition really exist in Christendom to-day?

Let us think of the best church from a spiritual standpoint that we know of. How many members can we count who have even made a confession of having consecrated their all to God—time, talent, wealth, all they have, or all they hope for, to the Lord? How many are living a life of sacrifice, walking in the footsteps of the Master, suffering persecution because of their loyalty to God?

How many are there among our friends who are church members who "count everything, but loss and dross, that they may win Christ?"

The Scriptures point out that the Church would leave her first love, and in the first period (that of the Church of Ephesus) she succumbed to the invitation of the world, and became associated with it; thus the Church soon became united to the State, and has since been interested in worldly affairs, so we found her taken up with the world's war, and it was the exception to hear a voice of protest against the effort of ministers who urged men to the fighting line.

How true was the Master's prediction: "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"

How could faith continue when such unfaithfulness of practice existed? So the Church lost her faith. She drifted into various errors, the most successful to fill Peter's coffers being the hell fire theory, but that is getting worn out, and people

are now too well educated for that to tell with them. Other theories have been brought in, such as evolution, Unitarianism, higher criticism, etc. The poor flocks are confused; they know not what to believe. The Master comes to find the faith. Christendom is weighed in the balance, and found wanting. "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin."

The thought now is often expressed: "Oh! never mind doctrine; it does not matter what you believe. Be honest, do good, lead a respectable life, go to church once on Sunday, and you will be sure to get to heaven."

This was demonstrated in the Great Parliament of Religions, held some years ago in Chicago (about 1897), when the ministers of the various denominations invited the Shinto and Buddhist priests to offer prayer to their heathen gods, while they all bowed in reverence. It mattered not in their eyes what we believe or what god we worship.

Surely there are to-day blind guides who are leading their flocks into the ditch of unbelief.

Many do not wish to enquire too deeply into these matters, as they enjoy the social conditions attached to church attendance. But the Lord's truly consecrated people cannot ignore their responsibility to God or let matters slide in such a manner. The Bible indicates that there would be a system of some kind that would be used by the Lord to nourish His people, but that a time would come when this system would prove false and the Lord would call His people out of her. The context of Rev. 18:4 shows that this system is not one of the nations, but that it would make the nations drunk with the "wine of her fornication," or wicked alliance. We see a clear indication here that the time would be when the Church would have become so corrupt that the Lord would "spew her out of his mouth," and call all His saints out of her. Then, as surely

as we love the Lord, it is necessary that we obey His voice.

An understanding of these matters is very important to all earnest Christians. We should not wish to heal what God has condemned, or to linger where He has bid us leave.—Jer. 51:9; Rev. 18:4.

The great apostle foretold that there would be a falling away from the faith, and a man of sin be developed.—2 Thess. 2:2-12.

We find this prediction has been wonderfully fulfilled.

In the first century the world took little notice of the Church (not many noble or great are called (1 Cor. 1:26), yet she made good progress and many converts were added, and thus numbers increased.

In the second century we have such names as Justin Martyr, Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius, who were famous for their piety and sanctity. Though there were many martyrdoms we do not read of many people of rank being among them, and their meetings were held in upper rooms or such places as were available; yet they had assumed sufficient numbers to be important enough to be persecuted. Gradually, they organised, and the bishops and clergy introduced formulas of prayer, sacraments, and baptisms, which became the foundation of the future polity.

In the third century the Church became more powerful and synods assembled from time to time to determine doctrines and to systematise the religion.

Not until the fourth century (We quote from "Lord's Roman World"), when the persecution had stopped, and Emperor Constantine had become a convert, when the Church was allied with the State, when the early faith was itself corrupted, when superstition and vain philosophy had entered

the ranks of the faithful, when bishops became courtiers and the churches became both rich and splendid, when politics and dogmatics went hand in hand, and emperors enforced the decrees of councils, did men of rank enter the Church.

When Christianity became the religion of the court, and of the fashionable classes, it was used to support the very evils against which it originally protested.

The Church was not only impregnated with the errors of pagan philosophy, but it adopted many of the ceremonies of Oriental worship.

Thus the great system was developed, and in the year 800 the Pope crowned Charlemagne King of France, and was himself recognised as the king of kings, assuming power to enthrone or dethrone any king at his pleasure.

Then came the period of the Reformation, when an attempt was made to purge out errors and get back to the purity of the doctrines of the early Church. Only partial success attended this, and the followers of the reformers soon drifted into the same ways, and into similar errors of doctrine as the mother church; the tendency all the time is for these Protestant daughters to go back towards the mother, therefore we see little difference between them; they are all one family, and have the family likeness, "the mark of the beast."

The Lord gave us some parables to illustrate this course of events.

The leaven which the woman hid in three measures of meal and the grain of mustard seed.

There can be no doubt that leaven, throughout the Bible, represents evil, sin, corruption. The parable begins, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of heaven."

The three measures of meal represented the "meat in due season," for the Church, the pure

doctrines and teachings of Christ and the apostles. The woman represents the Roman Catholic Church, which introduced false doctrines and corrupt ways and practices, even as the apostle Peter had prophesied, "There shall be false teachers among you who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them."—2 Pet 2:1.

Then the mustard seed represents the same great system that grew up in those four centuries and became so big a tree that now it is able to accommodate all kinds of wicked birds.

Christendom has indeed become the hold of every foul beast and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

Babylon the great has fallen, but what difference does all this make to the Lord's people? Surely it is that the Lord has ceased to send out the light of truth through this great system, and if we desire to understand His will, His word, and learn of His wonderful plan of salvation, then we must follow His instructions and seek the truth in His way. If the Good Shepherd calls His sheep out of Babylon, it is that He has a pasture for them outside, and if they will not hear His voice they will no longer be His sheep, for "My sheep hear my voice and follow me." If some sheep say there is food enough in Babylon when they have heard the call, they will soon grow thin and weary, and lose their hope and faith. If we look to the Lord to feed us we must listen to His voice and accept the provender in the way, and from the source He is pleased to send it.

The whole matter depends upon whether, in the first place, we have made a consecration to the Lord and received His spirit. If we have not received His spirit, then we cannot be expected to hear His call, for He is only calling "His people" to come out from her.

It has been through the lack of the Lord's spirit that the churches have lost the faith and gone into darkness. It was through lack of the spirit of consecration that the great corrupt system developed; for, without the Holy Spirit, spiritual things cannot be discerned, and the Lord will not give His spirit to any but those who are in the proper attitude, and have determined to do His will.

As we view the degeneracy of the Church let us take warning, for it is only as we maintain the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we can keep in tune with the Lord and preserve our knowledge of His will and plan.

If we allow some fond desire to come in, some way of our own, some selfish thought, pride or ambition, then be assured we shall find our spiritual eyesight declining; everything will take a natural turn for the natural mind will quickly assume control of the will, and our thoughts will turn to earthly conditions, for the spiritual promises do not appeal to the natural mind.—1 Cor. 2:14.

The disciples before Pentecost had only earthly hopes, they had no thought that they were to receive a change of nature and go to heaven. They enquired, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom? And the mother of Zebedee's sons expected they would sit in an earthly court, one at one side and one at the other, of the King of kings.

When Pentecost had come their views were altogether changed; earthly things lost their attraction and everything was considered but loss and dross, if by any means they might win Christ and share in His resurrection. The heavens were opened to them; they understood that a class (the Church) was being chosen to be joint-heirs in the kingdom which would bring about the peace and blessings promised for the rest of mankind in the new age.

Then they perceived that it was not earthly glory

that they were called to, but spiritual, "to sit with Christ in the heavenlies" that they were to become spiritual beings, like the Lord; that, as they had borne the image of the earthly (Adam), they were also to bear the image of the heavenly (second Adam). "When we shall see him, we shall be like him."—1 John 3:2.

"Whereby are given unto us great and precious promises that by these we might be made partakers of the divine nature."—2 Pet. 1:4.

The intelligent appreciation of the Bible and God's purpose in this age is dependent upon the maintenance of His spirit. The maintenance of the spirit is dependent upon the maintenance of the full submission of ourselves to the Lord, the crushing of self-will, the full consecration to the Lord of heart and mind, in humble walk with God in daily life, the one thing to do, His holy will.

Even before the apostles had passed away the falling from the faith had commenced; pride and ambition had started.—3 John 9.

The clergy class gradually formed, and the simplicity of the Master's arrangement was lost. "Call no man master for one is your Master in heaven;" call no man father for one is your Father in heaven." "All ye are brethren." Thus the Papal system developed and aspired to earthly power, forgetting the Lord's instruction, "Ye are not of the world," and "My kingdom is not of this age." They sought to be kings and priests without the suffering, forgetting that only as we suffer with Him shall we reign with Him.

While our Protestant friends recognise the false assumption of Papacy, yet they have not got rid of the great idea of winning the world for Christ, and establishing Christ's Kingdom for Him. They thus think they are setting up the kingdom by converting the heathen. So, while we sent out the

message of the approaching cataclysm of trouble they heeded it not; they ridiculed. They were too full of their own ways, too lacking in the spirit of the Lord, and we "seemed to them as one that mocked."

They went on christening their battleships, calling them omens of peace. They thought by their own power and might to set up the kingdom; they forgot "My kingdom is not of this age."

The Great Adversary Appears as the Angel of Light.

It was a plausible thing to endeavour to set up the kingdom, to win the world by preaching the Gospel and thus converting it, but their thoughts were carried along so that they concluded that these "Christian nations" of Europe were Christendom, that is Christ's Kingdom, whereas the Scripture tells us that Satan is the prince of this world.

The whole mistake is through lack of faith. If Christ had wished to conquer the world that way, could He not have done it? Had He wished to have entered the affairs of the nation of Israel as a man, do we doubt that He could have led them politically and nationally, conquered Rome and established His strong rule, and secured righteousness and peace in the earth.

How, then, would the Church have been chosen? How, then, would they have had the necessary experience of suffering for Christ's sake, for truth's sake, in order to develop the perfect character, spiritually, that would make them ready for their great change to be with their Lord and share His glory and the wondrous work of love for mankind now so soon to commence.

Let us rightly appreciate the opportunity of walking in the suffering footsteps of our Master, to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. "He

was led as a lamb to the slaughter." So we are, says the apostle, "accounted as sheep for the slaughter, we are killed all the day long."

Then we understand it is not for the Church to reign, to be in power during the Gospel age, but to be tested in all points like as He was. Only under sinful conditions in the world could we have similar experiences, and be fitted for sharing His throne as joint-heirs in His kingdom. There can be no doubt in the minds of any who will give this matter careful study but that Christendom of to-day is the Babylon of Revelation. It is not our arrangement; it is the Lord's. We are not to blame because it is so; it is for us simply to point it out—to identify her.

She had been the Lord's espoused, but she sought and became a great institution, married to the world. Her ministers became great men of the earth. She had been the beautiful gate of heaven, but she became corrupt. She had contained the Lord's people. But now Rev. 18:23 tells that "The light of a candle shall shine no more in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee."

Then we have no hesitation in saying that Christendom has lost Christ. Lost the light of truth, she can no longer explain the Word of God. She stumbles in her ignorance and darkness, and has become part and parcel of the world, engaged in the world's matters, and has lost her great promises of joint-heirship in the kingdom. These promises have now no meaning to her. She is confused in faith, and mixed in doctrine, and has become corrupt in every way. She had thought she was rich, and because of being worldly-minded, she said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and lack nothing;" therefore the Lord has spoken: "Because thou art neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my

mouth," and the voice of the Bride is no longer heard in her.

That which has happened to this great Babylon can happen to each individual. Let us, therefore, take the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Let us make sure of the Lord's great plan. What is His will for us, and what place in His household. What little part may we have in His service, both of the present as well as being vessels prepared for the Master's use in His kingdom. Let us more earnestly endeavour to see the privilege of the high calling and make our election sure to membership in the Body of Christ. Let us learn to know our Head more intimately, partake more of His spirit, and conform more completely and submissively to the will of God. Let us grow in grace and in knowledge that we may soon reach the mark; thus we may attain the character likeness of Christ, and finally enter the joys of the kingdom, and with Him participate in the wondrous work of blessing all the families of the earth.

Berean Questions.

1. What is the true Christian spirit?

Answer.—Gal. 5:22, 23; Col. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:29-32.

2. Is the divided condition of Christendom into sects pleasing to God, or in accord with His Word?

Answer.—1 Cor. 1:10-13; 2 Cor. 11:3, 4; Eph. 4:4; Rom. 12:5.

3. Where is the one true Church?

Answer.—Heb. 12:23; Luke 10:20; Acts 2:38, 47; John 4:20-24; Matt. 18:20; Philemon 2.

4. What has God planned as the future abode of man?

Answer.—Psa. 115:16; Gen. 13:17; Compare Acts 7:5; Jer. 31:15-17; Amos 9:15; Micah 4:1-7.

5. Was the present condition of the Church prophesied?

Answer.—2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4; 7, 8; Luke 18:8; Matt. 13:31-32; Rev. 18:2.

6. When its condition has become apparent, what is the duty of the Lord's people?

Answer.—Rev. 18:4; Matt. 13:30; Luke 21:34-36 (Matt. 24:28; Matt. 5:6); 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.

7. Do the Scriptures indicate that there would be blind guides, or unfaithfulness, on the part of the ministry?

Answer.—2 Pet. 2:1; Acts 20:28-30; 3 John 9; Matt. 7:15, 21-23; Ezek. 34:7-10; Isa. 56:10-12; Jer. 6:13; Phil. 3:18, 19; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jer. 23:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:3-5; 2 John 7-11.

8. Is it shown that the pure water of truth would be contaminated?

Answer.—2 Pet. 2:1, 2; Ezek. 34:18, 19; Titus 1:10, 11; Jude 4; 2 Thess. 2:3-15; Gal. 1:7-9.

9. Would it not be better for Christians to stay in the churches, and so help to better their condition?

Answer.—Jer. 51:6-10; Rev. 18:3-5, 23, 24. It is surely the part of the child of God to obey God and not to think he knows better than the Almighty.

10. Is it possible, having had the light, to lose it?

Answer.—Luke 11:35; Matt. 6:23; Heb. 6:4-6; Heb. 4:1; Heb. 2:1-3.

11. How do we gain a knowledge of spiritual matters?

Answer.—1 Cor. 2:7-12, 14-16; Rom. 12:1, 2; John 14:26; Acts 1:7.

12. Does the adversary use truth sometimes to deceive the Lord's people?

Answer.—Matt. 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; Col. 2:8, 23.

13. How may we be proof against such deceivableness?

Answer.—Psa. 91:1-9; Eph. 6:10-18; John 15:7-11.

STUDY XVI.

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

After the Order of Melchisedec.

"No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that was called of God as was Aaron. . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."—Heb. 5:4-6.

The apostle's statement forming the above texts is made in connection with his discussion of the Mosaic arrangement and the Aaronic Order of priesthood. Christ, while on earth, could not be a priest, because there was already a priesthood ordained of God—the family of Aaron. No Israelite could take part in this priesthood except he were of Aaron's lineage. To presume to take part in it without God's invitation would be a sin. To this day the Jews respect the Aaronic priesthood, and no one could serve as a priest unless he could show his genealogy back to Aaron.

In his Epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul calls attention to another priesthood. He declares that Jesus, who was not of the tribe of Levi, has become a Priest of a still higher order than the Aaronic; moreover, that God had foretold our Lord's Priesthood long before. (Psalm 110:4.) His was a Divine appointment to this priesthood. The call to be the Messiah and the highest of all priests was from the Father.

Here we have another proof that our Lord Jesus was not the Father. He could have only such honours as the Father would give Him. God glorified Him in giving Him this great priesthood. The apostle quotes from the prophet David respecting Jesus, "Thou art a Priest forever after the Order of Melchisedec."

Melchisedec was a great personage who lived in Abraham's day. So great was he that, after Abraham had won a great victory and wished to show his appreciation of God's goodness, the patriarch came to Melchisedec, "king of Salem and priest of the Most High God," and offered tithes of all he had captured.—Gen. 14:18-20.

Melchisedec is supposed to have been one of the shepherd kings who invaded Egypt and built the Great Pyramid, covering twelve acres, known for ages as one of the seven wonders of the world—about 2170 B.C.

How much higher than Aaron must he have been who was a type of Christ and of Christ's Priesthood in glory?

Melchisedec was not a priest who offered sacrifices in a linen robe; he was a priest who was at the same time a king—"A priest upon his throne." As such his position was higher in the type than the position of Aaron; for Aaron was a descendant of Abraham, and Abraham, great as he was as the patriarch and father of Israel and of the Aaronic Order of Priests, paid tithes to Melchisedec and received a blessing at his hands. Thus was typified, as the apostle explains, that the priesthood of sacrifice (the Aaronic) represents a lower plane or condition than the higher priesthood of kingship—the Melchisedec order. Melchisedec, priest and king, therefore, represented The Christ (Jesus and His Church) in glory and power, whereas the Aaronic order specially pictured the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord and the share which the Church has with Him in that sacrifice.

We read of Melchisedec, that, as a priest, he was without father, without mother, without descent, and that neither his beginning of days nor end of life are recorded in the genealogies. (Heb. 7:3, 6, Syriac.) Likewise the priesthood of which Jesus

is Head does not trace its lineage to any human source. This fact is strikingly typified in Melchisedec, whose lineage and death have purposely not been recorded. He was a priest without having inherited the office from his father or his mother, thereby picturing Christ's priesthood, which came not of the lineage of the flesh, as did the Aaronic priesthood, which natural Israel thought to be the real. Melchisedec's death was not recorded nor a successor named, that thus might be typified the continuity of Christ's Royal Priesthood.

In the Melchisedec type the work of sacrifice is not shown, as he represented the Christ glorified and reigning after the work of sacrifice had been completed. The Aaronic priesthood furnished typical illustrations of the sacrifices and sufferings of Christ (Head and Body) and the blessings to follow, but it did not completely illustrate the glorious, everlasting and unchangeable character of this Royal Priesthood during the Messianic age. For this cause Melchisedec was presented as a type, that thus might be shown his glorious office of priest and king combined. Here, too, the Body of Christ is no longer shown as separate individuals, but as one, complete. In the work of sacrifice; as represented in Aaron and his under priests, we have seen them more or less separately sacrificing; but all of the Church will share unitedly with their Head (Jesus) in the future glory represented in Melchisedec alone.

We see that our heavenly Father has conferred a very great honour upon our Lord Jesus Christ, in appointing Him to be the world's great Redeemer, High Priest and King. He is the One through whom will come all the blessings upon the world that God has designed. But before God could recognise Him in that position, He must prove our Lord, as the Bible declares.

Elsewhere St. Paul points out that our Lord Jesus left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and took upon Him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself still further—all that He might do the Father's will. His obedience to the Father finally led to the cross. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Phil. 2:5-11.) In that exalted position He is the antitype of Melchisedec.

This is corroborated by our Lord's own statement in the fifth chapter of the Revelation. There is pictured the Father, seated upon the throne of glory and holding in His right hand a scroll, written within and without and sealed with seven seals. This scroll represented the divine plan that God had purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world. What was in that scroll nobody knew but Himself. The entire plan was in God's own power; and, as the apostle declares, before the foundation of the world the Father foreknew that our Lord would be the One worthy to open the scroll.

Throughout heaven and earth the proclamation was made, "Who is worthy to loose the seals and to look therein?" Nobody came forward. Then St. John began to weep. After he had wept much an angel touched him and said, "Weep not. The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed." The Lion of Judah was the strong One of Judah, of which tribe God had prophetically declared that Messiah should come—of David's lineage. Here was the strong One, competent to do the work—absolutely perfect.

The difficulty with every other person in the world was that all were imperfect. But Jesus was sent into the world with all the qualities of perfec-

tion—in the image of God. When He became the Man Christ Jesus, He was qualified to fulfil the divine purpose. But He must be tested. No one heretofore had proven worthy, because the conditions that God had attached to the honour were very stringent. God was looking for One competent to be entrusted with the charge of affairs—a Prime Minister, as it were. One who would fully represent Him in the kingdom work and be associated with Him forever. For so high a position God had purposed that this One should be made partaker of the divine nature.

The Scriptures tell us that God has immortality; i.e., He is not liable to death. All the angels are mortal; not that they are dying, but that they could die. A mortal is not necessarily a dying person, but one to whom death is possible. God has supplies to continue existence to those who will be obedient and loyal to Him. To all such He is pleased to grant everlasting life. But He is immortal, not susceptible to death in any sense. He is not dependent upon food, water, air, rest or anything else. Jesus says, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26.) This is so high as to be beyond human comprehension.

God purposed that this One whom He would so highly exalt should also have this quality of immortality—life in Himself. But first He must demonstrate His loyalty to the fullest degree. Jehovah determined that the first opportunity to prove worthiness of this position should be given to the Logos, "The Word," the One first created by the Father. (Rev. 3:14; Col. 1:15; John 1:1-3.)

The Son of God left the glory which He had with the Father, was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. He was no ordinary man, no sinful man. We beheld in Him a glory that no other man had—a glory

of perfection. (John 1:14; Heb. 7:26.) He became a man for the very purpose of carrying out the Father's plan, which He could not then fully know. He knew that the first step of preparation was to be made a man. The next step was to present Himself for sacrifice. From those who interpreted the Law, He knew that there was nothing that He could do in His priestly office until He was thirty years old. When His thirtieth anniversary came, He presented Himself to the Father in consecration and was baptised by John.

There, at Jordan, the Father granted the Son the opening of His eyes of understanding. There He became the slain Lamb. At the very moment He made His consecration at Jordan He died, so far as His covenant with God was concerned. And so it is with His followers. The very moment we make our covenant with God, we are dead—dead to sin and to all earthly interests. So God there counted Jesus dead. He was the sacrificial Lamb. To Him was given the right to open the scroll.

So we read that at His baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord, "the heavens [the higher things] were opened unto him." (Matt. 3:16.) The deeper things of God's plan became open to His mind. Never before had He seen the meaning of these things. They were hidden from Him, as from any natural man. The natural man—whether perfect or imperfect, "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.) Jesus became a perfect natural man, and as such He gave all that He had in consecration. Then God begat Him of the Holy Spirit to the new nature. From the moment of spirit-begetting, old things passed away and all things became new.

After Jesus had received the Holy Spirit, He went immediately into the wilderness for forty days. During that time He was thinking over the Scriptures, which from boyhood He had heard read in the synagogue. Having now received the illumination of the Holy Spirit, He could understand what was meant by the manna in the wilderness, by the serpent erected upon the pole, by the bullock of the Atonement Day sacrifices, and by the Passover Lamb. The whole plan of God for human salvation was opened to Him. He had "loosed the seven seals." By that time He fully understood all that He was to suffer. He saw that He was to give up His life sacrificially, that He was to be crucified.

Then, after all the stress of forty days without food, the devil came and tempted Him. This was the opportunity, in His weakened physical condition, for the adversary to present a temptation. But our Lord withstood all of Satan's suggestions, and finally the devil left Him. We have no record that Satan ever again tried to tempt our Lord.

God thoroughly proved the One who was to be the great antitype of Melchisedec, the Priest upon His throne, partaker of the divine nature. And Jesus demonstrated His worthiness, not only during those forty days in the wilderness, but during the following three and a half years, clear down to Calvary—even to the death of the cross. Now He is the highly exalted One, far above angels, principalities, powers and every name that is named. He is at the Father's right hand—the chief place of favour. Our Lord Jesus is God's great Prime Minister—next to the Father Himself.

But the scroll in God's hand contained more than this. It showed that the Father, who had called the Lord Jesus, had called Him to be the Head over a Church, which is His Body. Nineteen hundred years before the Messianic kingdom was due to be

set up, God sent Jesus into the world that He might open up the way and that Jews and Gentiles might come in and participate with Jesus, first in the tests and afterwards in the honour. In the Book it is written that not only a bullock, but also a Lord's goat must be offered in sacrifice on the Atonement Day. Thus the Church are to be sharers in the sufferings of Christ and in the glory to follow.—Heb. 13:11-13.

So all the work of this Gospel age has been with a view to perfecting this company. First the call went to such Jews as were ready, that these might be brought into the Church, to be of the spiritual seed of Abraham. But there were not enough of them; and so the door was thrown open to the Gentiles, that as many of them as desired might come in and be fellow-heirs with the Jews. All these are to be members of the Body of the great antitypical Priest and King, "after the order of Melchisedec."

God is now calling merely the class that is anxious to come to Him. The apostle speaks of some who were feeling after God, if haply they might find Him. (Acts 17:27.) Now there is only one way to come to Him, and that way is by membership in the Body of Christ. Those who will walk in this narrow way shall become joint-heirs with Christ. Some say, "I think that I will wait a little while." They are not altogether ready to sacrifice—to give up all to the Lord. Jesus said to some in His day, "Sit down and count the cost." It is better that one should not put his hand to the plow than that he should do so, and then look back and wish that he were not there.

"If any man will come after me [be my disciple], let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." So then we see the conditions of discipleship. And whatever the Father's providence may be for us, we wish to have. Jesus did not specify what

was to come to Him. The Father had specified our Lord's experiences before the foundation of the world. As for you and for me, our part is to do the Father's will—to drink whatever cup the Father shall pour for us.

For each consecrated child of God the great question is, "Am I walking in the steps of Jesus?" Have we entered into a covenant with God, as our Lord did? Faithful is He who has called us. If we fail to get the prize of our calling, the fault will be ours alone. God is ready to do for us as He was ready to do for Jesus.

Now to come back to the statement, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." Did we call ourselves? No, indeed! How did we come to a knowledge of the truth. Thank God, we have had the ears to hear His message! Thank God that this privilege came to us—that we were called of God! To what were we called? Hear the call that applies to Jesus and to all His disciples—the call to which Jesus responded, and to which you and I are to respond. It reads, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Psa. 50:5.) By nature we were sinners, like all the fallen race of Adam. But even as sinners we may have been trying to do our best. Then the message reached us, speaking peace through Jesus Christ, a message telling us that if we gave ourselves to God we would be forgiven our sins, begotten of the Holy Spirit and accepted into God's family.

God's arrangement is that our Lord Jesus is to sanctify and make saints of those who have taken these steps. He will impute of His merit to such, to make up for their natural imperfections. To give them of that merit would make them perfect

human beings. To impute the merit is to give them a credit on God's account books.

God has arranged that nothing shall come to His altar except that which is without blemish. We cannot come, therefore, except as our Lord Jesus shall make up wherein we are short of perfection. Christ has proposed to do this, in order that we may give acceptable sacrifices through Him. Is that not a blessed arrangement? It is made to permit us to share in the sufferings of Christ that by and by we may share in His glories. (2 Tim. 2:11, 12.) All that He has He will share with His faithful Church; and by way of encouraging us He says that He will make all things work together for our good.—Rom. 8:28.

Our Father will bless our trials and difficulties. He will not permit us to be tried above that we are able; with every temptation He will provide a way of escape. (1 Cor. 10:13.) Let us be careful to accept this wonderful provision of God's grace, that we may be fully-accepted members of this great Melchisedec priesthood, of which our Lord Jesus is the Head. As soon as the last members of this Order are completed, the entire number—144,000—will stand with the Lamb upon Mount Zion, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.—Rev. 14:1-5.

Character Essential—Faithfulness the Test.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. 1:7.

Faithfulness is the standard by which character is to be tested and determined, and this test applies not only to God's consecrated people, called in the Scriptures, saints, but in large measure it applies to every man everywhere according to his light and

opportunities. Nearly every parent can witness to the fact that children of to-day are less reliable, less faithful—have less character—than those of his childhood's days. Nearly every employer of servants can witness to the fact that servants are less reliable than in years gone by—that they have less character, that wages and pleasure are their chief consideration; and since there is a great demand for service of every kind, principle, character, faithfulness, seem to have little weight in the minds of the employed.

Storekeepers can testify that the employees in whom they can place confidence for faithfulness to duty, watched or not watched—in whose honesty they can thoroughly rely, and in whose loyalty to principles of righteousness and honour they can have confidence—are much more scarce than formerly. While with some the secret of this loss of character is the love of money, with others it is a love of pleasure, of show, of dress, of amusement—"lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." With the present demand for the services of all healthy, intelligent people, there comes a test of character, of faithfulness to principle, unknown a short time ago when situations were more difficult to obtain. Even those who hold situations very frequently cannot be relied upon, but prove unfaithful, lacking in character, and when called to account content themselves with saying, "Cancel my engagement; I will find another situation."

Thus we see that present conditions are destructive of character—unfavourable to the cultivation of the principles of righteousness in the mind of the average man or woman, boy or girl. Parents cannot place as much reliance upon their children as formerly, nor children upon their parents; husbands upon their wives, nor wives upon their husbands; teachers upon their pupils, nor pupils upon their

teachers; pastors cannot so thoroughly rely upon the character and principles of their congregations, nor can congregations so fully rely upon the fixed characters of their pastors. Every now and then they have the confession of some minister that he has long been preaching a creed which he did not believe.

"Awake to Righteousness and Sin Not."

This appeal of the apostle is especially appropriate to-day, and it should be the effort of all of us to lift up the proper standard of righteousness, not only in our teachings, but in all the acts and affairs of life—"Lift up a standard for the people."

This standard of character, as we have already remarked, is faithfulness. Every messenger of the Gospel should realise that he has taken an obligation, not only to God, but also to the congregation that he serves—to minister to them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. How any can satisfy their consciences with less than this is difficult to understand, but the fact is borne in upon us from day to day by their public utterances, in which many of them seem to glory in their shame—in their confession of years of disloyalty to the truth and to their confiding flocks. Such men should not be trusted in the future; not a word of theirs should be believed until they bring forth fruits in their lives, evidencing a thorough reformation—truth in the inward parts.

Every professed Christian should arouse himself to ascertain clearly, positively, what creed he has professed. He should re-examine it in the light of the Divine Word, and either reapprove and freshly avow it, if found to be true, or he should reject it and pronounce it no longer his, if found to be untrue. How can we have honesty or faithfulness in our dealings with our fellow-creatures or with our-

selves if we are deficient in this quality in respect to the things of God—if we handle the Word of God deceitfully, and draw nigh to Him with our lips while our hearts are far from our professions, or while our minds reject them—how can we expect to have the Divine blessing and enlightenment?

As the apostle says, "Lie not one to another, brethren"—neither falsely misrepresent the views and teachings of another, nor falsely misrepresent your own. Let us be thoroughly honest and, beginning with honesty in our religion, let us allow this quality of faithfulness to pervade all the avenues of life. As parents, with children, be honest, truthful, faithful to your trust, not shirking the same, but at the sacrifice of time and pleasure do your duty toward those to whom the laws of nature and the Word of God tell you you have responsibility—toward your offspring. As children, forget not the responsibility in the sight of God according to the laws of nature—"If any provide not for his own, specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."—1 Tim. 5:8.

As employers, as teachers, as superintendents, let us appreciate more and more the responsibilities of life, the duties of life; let us develop character by attending to these duties—by faithfulness. As pupils, as employees, as servants, clerks, let us learn that there is a principle involved in even the slightest affairs of life; that whoever is obedient to these principles is making character, and whoever is neglecting them is undermining character. Loyalty to God must come first, but loyalty to obligations as pupils and servants must certainly be remembered and practised if we would grow in character development. Our Lord's words apply in all these cases most specifically: "He that is

faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much."

If we do not learn to be faithful and conscientious in respect to the small affairs of life we will not have the character which will make us faithful in the larger duties and responsibilities that may yet come to us in the present or in the future life.

Called—Chosen—Faithful.

Rev. 17:14.

These are our Lord's words and in His own order. Faithfulness is placed as the finality, the culmination, the test. It is not sufficient that we have been called of the Lord; it is not sufficient that we have accepted that call and come under its terms and conditions, and thus have been accepted of the Lord as His chosen ones. It is necessary that beyond this we shall develop character, and, as the apostle expresses it, become "copies of God's dear Son," ere we can be counted of the Lord as faithful. And without this character-development, faithfulness, we cannot hope to inherit the Kingdom. Faithfulness is thus made the test of the graduation of the Church from their present position and condition to the glorious station to which as the Bride of Christ they have been called, to be heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, their Lord, if so be that they suffer with Him that they may also be glorified together.—Rom. 8:17.

The suffering here referred to by the apostle as necessary to the Church's share with Christ in the heavenly glory of the Messianic Kingdom is presented in the Scriptures from the two following standpoints: (1) It represents our sacrifice, our participation with our Lord and Master in His sacrifice—suffering with Him. (2) This suffering is held out before us in the Scriptures as a necessary condition to the attainment of the King-

dom, because the suffering is attendant upon, or incidental to, the trial of our faith.

This is referred to by the apostle in our text when he declares that the trial of the faith of the saints is much more precious, much more carefully done than the trial of gold in the fiery furnace. He explains to us the reason why this should be so—because, although gold is one of the most precious metals, it is nevertheless a perishable thing; its value is comparatively unstable. It may have greater value at one time and less at another, and the Scripture assures us that the time is coming when by reason of the change of dispensation gold will have no such value as at the present time. Hence the apostle contrasts it with the character of the Christian, whose value will increase, because, when the present testing time is ended, all the faithful, those who stand the trial, will be changed by the power of the Lord from earthly nature to heavenly nature, and become of inestimable value as inheritors of the exceeding great and precious promises and their reward, the divine nature.—2 Pet. 1:4.

“Gold Tried in the Furnace.”

When we read in the Scriptures of the trial of our faith, the thought is that of trying out impurities, refining. This is shown by the illustration. Gold tried in the furnace is gold that is melted under the proper heat to separate the dross from the pure metal. This cannot be done without the heat, and yet if the heat were not regulated the effect would be the burning of the gold and its evaporation as gas. Hence in all furnaces where gold is tried or refined all the arrangements are very carefully made, and the refiner is a person of great skill, lest any of the precious metal should be destroyed, so that the proper purification may take place without destruction.

And this is the thought which the Lord everywhere holds out to those who are His consecrated people during this Gospel Age. He informs us that we have been accepted of Him through the merit of Christ; that our faith is counted to us for righteousness; that our good endeavours are counted as though they were the actual accomplishment of all that we strive to accomplish; that our unintentional weaknesses and frailties are all considered by the heavenly Metallurgist who has charge of the refining process.

The refiner of gold first ascertains what are the peculiar characteristics of the dross with which it is combined, and then he arranges such fluxes in his furnace as will best combine with those elements of dross in the ore, so that the heating process may not be in vain. Thus it is with the Heavenly Refiner, who knows His people individually, particularly, and who so arranges for all those who have consecrated themselves to Him and who willingly abide in His care, that the difficulties and vicissitudes of life to which they shall be exposed shall be "fiery trials" so combined and regulated as to most easily dissolve and separate their dross—to the intent that when the trying or purifying process is complete they may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing—fully acceptable to the great Father of Lights.

We come now to the crux of our lesson. We have already seen how desirable it is that the world should form character, how great a loss it experiences if it fails so to do. We may well imagine and well remember, too, that every point of character lost by the world will be one that will need to be regained with labour in the life to come if they would attain at any time to Divine favour! and every point of character gained in the present life will be that much of an aid in the future life to their

attainment of Divine favour under Christ's Kingdom. But now we notice the still more important testing which belongs to the Church—not the nominal church, but the real Church—those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice of time, talents, influence, life itself, to Him and to His service.

The refining process means, O, so much to these, because having been enlightened more than others, having tasted of the "heavenly gift," having been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, having come into this special relationship with God, there is a trial, a testing for either life or death! Should they not attain character that will be pleasing to God, and insure them a share in the heavenly condition, it will prove that they have "received the grace of God in vain."

Because of this relationship to the Lord they are in the furnace of trial at the present time. If they submit themselves willingly to the Lord, proportionately less of the fiery trials will be necessary to separate their dross; but if, unfaithful to their covenant of sacrifice, they cling to their sins and weaknesses and imperfections and fail to develop character it will require the stronger heat to release these impurities, and if they still are recalcitrant the still greater heat of the furnace will be applied, which, as the apostle explains, would consume them as adversaries of God, adversaries of righteousness, adversaries of the principles for which God stands and for which they had agreed to stand as His children and followers of His dear Son, their Lord and Redeemer.

"Think It Not Strange."

Those who have become the Lord's "peculiar people," by making a "covenant of sacrifice"—surrendering earthly interests and prospects for the

heavenly—are admonished by the apostle that they are specially in the school of Christ for the development of character, so as to constitute them “copies of God’s dear Son” in their hearts, though they cannot come up to His likeness in the flesh because of their imperfections. Writing to such, the Apostle Peter says, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice; that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”—1 Pet.. 4:12, 13.

All of the “beloved” must have just such experiences of fiery trials. Indeed these trials are a mark or sign to them that they are the Lord’s beloved. As the Apostle Paul declares, the heavenly Father “scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,” all need such scourging or chastening for the development of their characters. All need thus to be tried with fiery trials so as to purge from them the dross of this world—self-reliance, worldly wisdom, earthly ambition, etc., to purify their faith in the Lord, in His promises, His power, His grace all sufficient. Instead of thinking these fiery trials strange we learn to consider them most reasonable and indispensable.

What Christian of experience has not found that some of the very best developments of his character have come through fiery trials? How else would he learn to exercise heavenly patience, forbearance, sympathy for others, love for the brethren, compassion for the world in its troubles and trials? How else than in the furnace of affliction have the Lord’s people learned the great lessons of faith, humility and love? Nor is it for us to say when we have had a sufficiency of trial, when the

fiery trials shall cease. It is for our faith to accept the Divine assurance that our Lord cares for our interests and "will not suffer us to be tempted, tried, above that we are able, but will in every trial provide a way of escape" from whatever portion of it that would be too severe for us.

We may be sure when we come into touch with some Christian brother who manifests great faith in the Lord and in His Word, and great love for His cause and for the brethren, that we have come in contact with one who has been in the fiery furnace, who has there learned of the Lord these valuable lessons, and that because of these experiences he has been able to "put on Christ"—to put on the spirit or disposition of the Master and to be more and more conformed to His likeness.

We see the reasonableness of the Divine arrangement, and that it is not an arbitrary matter on the Lord's part, but a necessary arrangement for our benefit, to assist us in making our calling and election sure. When we hear the Master's voice saying, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom," it would cause us terror did we not know Him and did we not remember His assurances of His loving protection of our welfare—that He is the great Refiner who looks for His image in the molten metal and who skilfully withdraws it from the fire ere it be consumed, just in time to fully separate it from the dross.

Let us then renew our determination that our lives shall be marked by great increase in character-formation—that we will be faithful to our natural duties and responsibilities and also to our obligations and vows. Seeing that faithfulness is the character approved of God, let us resolve on its increase—that we will be more faithful as parents to our children and as children to our parents; as husbands to our wives, and as wives to our hus-

bands; as employers to our employees and as employees to our employers. Above all, let us remember that the centre of faithfulness is toward God.

And as for us who have consecrated our all upon the Lord's altar in harmony with the apostle's injunction, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God and your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1), let us remember that we have an additional obligation to faithfulness—that our covenant of sacrifice implies still more than an avoidance of sin, that it means that we will seek opportunity to use our every faculty to show our appreciation of the prospect of becoming joint-heirs with His Son in the heavenly Kingdom. "Faithful is He who has called us, who also will do it," writes the apostle, and the conditions are that we shall fulfil our covenant and be not only called and chosen, but also faithful. Let us not forget, either, the Master's words that he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is greater; that he who is unjust in that which is least will be unjust, unfaithful in that which is greater. With this in view let us not forget the little things of life and that the Lord is specially judging of our professions and heart desires by these rather than by the greater things.

Berean Questions.

1. What steps are necessary in order to become members of the Royal Priesthood?

Answer.—John 3:3; Acts 16:31; Acts 11:17; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:7, 13; Rom. 5:1; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 1:30.

2. Has this opportunity been available to all?

Answer.—Heb. 5:4; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 1:26-28; Eph. 1:4-6, 11; John 6:37, 44, 65.

3. What did Aaron in his sacrificial robes typify

Answer.—1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 8:3; Heb. 3:1; Rom. 8:26; Heb. 13:11-15.

4. What did Aaron in his robes of "glory and beauty typify?
 Answer.—Heb. 5:10; Matt. 25:31; Acts 17:31; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:19; Jude 14, 15.

5. What was the relationship between the Father and the Son in the beginning?

Answer.—Rev. 3:12; John 1:1 (Diaglott); 1 John 4:9; Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:14-18.

6. What Scriptures indicate our Lord's perfection as a man, and how do we understand Rom. 8:3?

Answer.—Jesus was made in the similitude of man who is sinful. Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5; John 8:46; Heb. 2:9.

7. Is Christ equal with God?

Answer.—Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:6 (see Diaglott or R.V.); John 14:28; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

8. Do John 10:30 and John 17:11, 21 teach that the Father and the Son are the same person?

Answer.—No; but they are one in spirit, in purpose. So is the Church one (John 17:20) with Christ. 1 Cor. 8:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:3; Jude 1; Eph. 4:5, 6; Matt. 27:46.

9. At the end of Christ's reign, what attitude does He assume in regard to the Father?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Cor. 11:3.

10. Did Jesus know all the details of the divine plan?

Answer.—No. Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7.

11. What was the key to open the seals and reveal the divine plan?

Answer.—Rev. 5:5 and 9; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 5:12-18.

12. Has our Lord still the marred and wounded body?

Answer.—1 Pet. 3:18; John 6:51; 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3.

13. Quote Scriptures indicating His present glorified condition?

Answer.—Phil. 2:9-11; Isa. 53:12; Heb. 1:2-4, 8, 13; Eph. 1:20-22; Rev. 3:21.

14. If the saints must suffer with Him in order to reign with Him, what is necessary that their sacrifice may be acceptable to God in order that they may walk in the footsteps of Jesus?

Answer.—Rom. 3:24, 25; Rom. 4:5-8, 23-25; Rom. 5:1, 8:1; John 3:18, 36; Eph. 2:1-9, 13, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; 1 John 2:1, 2; Heb. 13:10-15.

15. Are the members of the Royal Priesthood the only ones saved during the Gospel age?

Answer.—Rev. 7:9-14; 1 Cor. 9:26, 27 (the word "castaway" should be "unapproved"); 1 Cor. 3:15.

16. Who will be members of the Great Company?

Answer.—Those who, having failed to win the prize, still maintain faith in Christ as the ransom for all. Rom. 2:7; Phil. 3:12, 14; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; Heb. 2:15.

17. Where do we find mention of this class in the Bible?

Answer.—1 Cor. 5:5; Matt. 25:8; Lev. 16:10; Heb. 2:15; Psalms. 45:14; Gen. 24:59, 60; Rebekah "The Bride." Nurse "Great Company."

18. What nature will this class possess in the resurrection?

Answer.—All the Church of the first-born will be spiritual. Heb. 12:23; 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:44; Psalms. 45:14, 15. These consecrated their human lives and hopes to death, and being begotten of the Spirit, will ultimately, we understand, be born Spirit beings in the resurrection.—1 Cor. 5:5. The difference between the Bride class and the Great Company would appear to be that the one overcame all the inherited weakness of the flesh and influences of the world and the devil, while the others were impeded in the race by these, though still in heart loyal to God.—2 John 8.

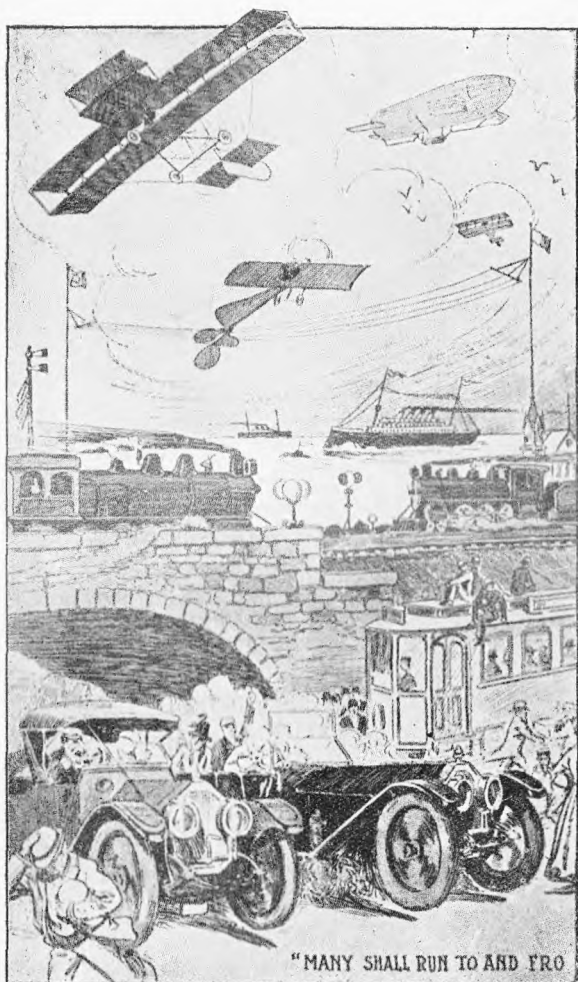
"THINK IT NOT STRANGE."

"Think it not strange, beloved,
When fiercely burns the fiery flame!
Think it not strange, but praise His name,
Who counts thee worthy to partake
Of painful sufferings for His sake.

Nor think it strange
When loved ones scornful from thee turn,
The Truth reject, the message spurn;
Consider Him who thus endured,
And Immortality secured!

"Think it not strange, beloved,
If sometimes every door seems closed,
And all thine efforts be opposed,
But calmly wait in patience till
The Master shall reveal His will.

Nor think it strange
When darker grows the "narrow way,"
Press on, thy Master soon shall say,
"Enough, My child, thou hast done well,
Come, enter in, the Prize is won!"



"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO

STUDY XVII.

ROLLING BACK THE CURSE.

"When Israel went out of Egypt . . . Judah was his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."
—Psa. 114.

In this Psalm we have a beautiful poetical picture of the deliverance of the world from the bondage to sin and death, under Him of whom Moses wrote, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me." (Acts 3:22.) It is a theme speaking comfort to all who long for the righteousness, peace and joy promised in the Scripture as a result of Messiah's reign—that great day when man shall learn to know God and will appreciate the beauties of the great Creator and will find in Him their God, worthy of all adoration and praise. They will truly say, "This is our God, we have waited for him." Jehovah shall see the finished work of the great Mediator and be satisfied, and once more pronounce it "very good" when Christ shall hand over the Kingdom to God. (1 Cor. 15:24, 28.) Then God shall be all in all and will rejoice in His people, ransomed from the fall and restored to the Divine likeness in heart and mind.

For 6000 years Jordan's death stream has kept the human race groaning and travailing together in pain, in the darkness of sin under the dominion of Satan. Surely the waterfloods have overflowed the human family, and we have need to pray "neither let the deep swallow me up."—Psa. 69:15.

Sin, sorrow, trouble and death had a small beginning. It was but as a trickling breach in the reservoir of life; how soon, however, it burst all barriers and the floods of great waters have covered

the earth. As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men. (Rom. 5:21.) The death stream has widened, the waters have become more muddy and bitter, so that Isaiah describes the condition. "The wicked are like the troubled waves of the sea, it cannot rest; whose waters thereof cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, said the Lord, to the wicked."—Isa. 57:20, 21.

Selfishness and greed have abounded, and the world has reached the climax, the only possible conclusion to such a course of disobedience to the kind and righteous requirements of a just and loving God. Now it is the day of God's wrath. A day of recompense has automatically come, in accord with God's natural law. Now the natural forces in the social fabric are engaged in gigantic struggles, with selfish motives. No one can compound a remedy for the great distress and unrest.

One theory after another has failed—Communism, Single Tax, Socialism, Bolshevism and Anarchism. All the elements of society are in a state of agitation, well described by Psa. 46:3 (Leeser), "The waters thereof roar and foam," and Isa. 28:2, using the same symbol concerning this time of trouble, speaks of a "destroying storm as a flood of mighty waters overflowing (that) shall cast down the earth."

Probably all will agree that these symbols are forceful and particularly descriptive of the circumstances of our day, and generally of the whole history of humanity.

All recognise the universality of sorrow, suffering and woe. While, maybe, for a few brief years, fortune may appear to smile, and pleasures abound, and life seems all sunshine and troubles may not come our way; yet it is but a little while with all, for man is surely "born to trouble as the sparks

fly upward." Clouds arise, the sunshine passes, the deep waters of trouble, anguish and death roll along, for none can long escape that cruel enemy. It comes to the palace as well as the cottage, the mansion as well as to the House of Charity. Sickness, calamity, disaster, either in business or the home, and the fairy days of pleasure find an abrupt ending. Maybe it is the nearest and dearest that is snatched from our bosom by the relentless hand of death—an aching void is left which can never be mended until Jordan's stream has been smitten, and the curse rolled back, and the great enemy, death, is removed and victory o'er the grave is complete, and we may meet with our loved ones again.

Then, too, there are sorrows worse than death, and these, too, must await that happy day when it shall be demonstrated, notwithstanding the difficulties at the present time in believing it possible, that "earth hath no sorrow which heaven cannot heal."

How often do we hear the cry, "Oh, why does God permit it all?" Such waterfloods of trouble. How many have made shipwreck of faith because they could not find an answer as to why God should have permitted the great war, and why such a monstrosity as German militarism should have been allowed to develop, again, as to why the forces of anarchy should make the waterfloods run deeper still.

Yet history reveals the fact that such abominable things have been permitted all the way down, only this has been on a larger scale. It cannot be more abominable than what occurred in the dark days of martyrdom and such outrages. The Lord, has, however, permitted it and the devil's kingdom has prospered while man has been learning the lesson of experience that "the way of the transgressor is

hard," and what is the consequence of taking his own course and departing from the providence and protection of his benevolent Creator.

The lesson will be learned, and the benefit will be seen when the full opportunity of the Messiah's reign of righteousness becomes available to all. In this Psalm the waters of Jordan very appropriately symbolise the stream of death, sorrow and trouble. The word Jordan in the Hebrew signifies "judged down," "downward," "to fall down," "descend." Thus it well illustrates the course of sin, condemnation—death of the sinful race of mankind. A comparison of Scriptures will no doubt be helpful in this connection, showing the use of "floods" and "waters" as indicative of trouble and death. Psal. 32:6: "Surely the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him." Psal. 69:1, 2: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. . . . I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Psal. 69:14, 15: "Let not the waterfloods overflow me. Let me not sink, . . . let me be delivered from them that hate me and out of the deep waters." Psal. 114:7: "Deliver me out of the great waters."

In this Psalm 114 which we are studying the picture is of these waters being driven back. It is a matter in which all are concerned, not only because we realise that these waters have come in unto our own souls, and that death reigns in our mortal bodies, evidenced by aches, pains and discomforting ailments, but because the waters of the Jordan have swallowed up our loved ones. We have longings for "vanished smiles and voices gone," and our hearts leap at the prospect of their return from the land of the enemy.

We are anxious not only for this death stream to be driven back, but also for the establishment of the kingdom beyond Jordan, when Jericho shall

have fallen and the promised land be entered. In other words, we look for the destruction of satan's kingdom, both ecclesiastical and social, and for God's Kingdom to be established in the hands of the anti-typical Joshua, and for the times of restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. When, instead of sin reigning unto death, grace shall reign unto eternal life by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 5:21.) This death stream has already been smitten for the Church. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.—Rom. 8:1.

This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. (1 John 5:11, 12.) We know that we have passed from death unto life. (1 John 3:14.) These have passed over from condemnation and death to be at peace with God.—Rom. 5:1.

The Captain of our salvation has conquered sin and death, He has led captivity captive—He has the keys of death and of hell. He has already opened up a "new and living way" to them that believe. "Death hath no more dominion over him" and "sin shall not have dominion over you."

Shortly, the Church class, being completed and the great marriage of the Lamb having taken place, the Lord's Kingdom shall be established for the deliverance of all the "residue of men." (Acts 15:17.) The same power of the Lord's Spirit will commence to roll back the curse; the stream of death will again be smitten, so that all the willing and obedient may go up the highway of holiness, out of the thralldom of sin and death. The way will be open for all earth's millions, to be awakened from the prison house of death, the tomb.

What a complexity of error and evil has flowed alongside this stream of death for the past 6,000

years, ever increasing its numerous forms of deceptions and delusions. The adversary has used human agencies in the development of false religions, also the great counterfeit of Christ's Kingdom—the papal system. He has ever appeared as an angel of light, and always worked on the minds of the superstitious, impressionable and sentimental, usually along the lines of fear. To those delivered from his kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, rejoicing in the spirit of love and liberty, it seems astonishing how successful Satan has been in foisting upon the minds of people the most absurd and foolish things, bringing them into bondage to fear, so that they become afraid to use their God-given reasoning powers or to exercise personal judgment in matters religious.

Truly "the god of this world" has "blinded the minds of them which believe not" (those who are weak in faith), lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4.) Thus he has hindered the cause of truth, knowledge, light and liberty.

As a consequence we find to-day a confusion of religions—quite a Babel—in fact, it is well pre-figured in the "Tower of Babel." The builders went their own course; they would build a way to heaven to escape the "waterfloods." They became so confused in language that they could not understand each other, and the work ceased.

We find the Scriptures refer to the present man-made systems, comprising what men call "Christendom" as Babylon. Thus, by the formation of creeds and dogmas and forms and ceremonies, the simple and reasonable plan of salvation has been beclouded. Man has been deflected from God while made to believe that he knew Him, and was pleasing Him, in all the empty ceremonials sanctimoniously carried out week by week. All this has had

a demoralising effect—a blinding effect—hindering from a clear perception of God and an understanding of what He requires from His creatures.

Satan's devices are not open frontal attacks. By philosophy he leads the mind to desire something, and will then present the counterfeit of truth. The spiritualist desires to communicate with dead friends; an evil spirit undertakes to personate the departed. The tongue speaker and faith healer, hankering after demonstration instead of walking by faith, is supplied by Satan with the counterfeit of the Holy Spirit, according to the conception of the people, and produces the tongue-speaking and healing, and the people are deluded.

India, China, Japan and Africa have been more beclouded than Christendom, and have thus come more under the dominion of evil spirits; yet every sect of Christendom would appear to have been affected, and, in so far as false and foolish doctrines have been endorsed, sin, wickedness, and hypocrisy have abounded.

Now the light is breaking, people are rejecting the dogmas of the "dark ages," and some are rejoicing in the clearer light which is shining from the Word of God, revealing a reasonable, intelligent and benevolent purpose on the part of the Great Creator.

Others not having the light are rejecting religion altogether. The day when priest and Pope could dictate the faith of the people, and when none were permitted to interpret the Bible for themselves is now passed. A new age is coming in—the prince of darkness is going out—the Sun of Righteousness is arising; the glimmerings are in the east; gloom and darkness are already being dispelled. "The pure language (uncontaminated truth) will soon be turned to the people, and they will all call on the Lord with one consent." (Zeph. 3:9.) This will

be a great factor in rolling back the curse of ignorance, superstition, sin, and death; the declaration of God's gracious purpose—the true Gospel—so that all may understand the “good news which shall be to all people”—news of opportunity of justice in the earth, of righteousness, peace, plenty, joy, love, and life eternal.

As the death stream was smitten for the Church that the members in the Body of Christ might be chosen, now the time is near when the Bride of Christ shall be complete, and soon a wider invitation may be proclaimed. The narrow way, of which it is written, “Few there be that find it,” will soon be ended, and the highway opened up, a way so easy and so plain that “the wayfaring man though a simpleton may not err therein.” The water-floods of death will be driven back once more, and the water of life pure and crystal will be available for all the willing and obedient.—Isa. 35:8; Isa. 62:10.

Gradually every stain of sin will be removed from the earth; the incorrigible sinner, having had every opportunity of forsaking his ways (Isa. 65:20) will be destroyed, and every creature in heaven and on the earth shall be to the praise and glory of the Creator.—Rev. 5:13.

The Highway.

This highway does not lead to a heavenly home at the other side of the veil, but to life eternal on the earth. The hope of the Church is so different from the Lord's provision for the “residue of men.”

Nevertheless, how beautiful will be the earth under these perfect conditions, when the stream of death is dried up there will be no aches, pains, or sorrows, no old or decrepit person but health, life, peace and joy everywhere, and all around forms of beauty and loveliness, everyone just and true. The

earth itself shall yield its increase without the labour and sweat of face; the desert shall blossom as the rose—no pests, thorns, nor dangers of any kind. The whole earth shall become a paradise, “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.” “His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.”—Hab. 2:14; 3:3.

The remedy for present distress is shown in this 114th Psalm: “The sea saw it.” Amidst the tumult of present day troubles, strikes, lockouts, revolutions, and anarchy, this remedy has been in course of preparation. Indeed this decade has been termed in the Scriptures “the day of his preparation.” Daniel 12:1 speaks of Michael standing up, and there being such a time of trouble as never was since there was a nation. He also says, concerning the Gentile powers, that in the days of these kings shall the Lord God set up a kingdom which shall stand for ever.

The fact that kings are fast losing control and passing away indicates that, though unperceived by men, this everlasting kingdom is being established.

The sea (the restless masses of mankind), has not yet recognised this, they are still trusting to their own methods and theories. Soon they will have had their experiences and being humbled, will begin to comprehend that there is a God in heaven whose kind and just laws it is better to obey. They will begin to realise that there is a new influence, a new controlling power making itself felt. The “sea” shall see it, and flee away. “There shall be no more sea,” no more restless, surging, discontented masses, for “the desire of all nations” will usher in the golden age, so long foretold.

“What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest, thou Jordan that thou wast driven back.”

The “sea” never was so restless, never so stormy

as to-day. Jordan's stream never before ran so deep, never carried away so many to the tomb, as in the wicked world war, revolutions, Bolshevism, famine, plague, and pestilence of this time. The Psalmist shows why the "sea" will flee away, and why Jordan will be driven back.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear though the earth (social fabric) be removed, though the mountains (kingdoms) be carried into the midst of the "sea" (surging masses of mankind); though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though mountains shake with the swelling thereof. (So to-day the nations are shaking with the clamouring of the masses.) "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in fire."

"Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."—Psa. 46:1, 2, 3, 8, 9.

So also in our Psalm 114:7 there is the reason shown. It is the presence of Christ, the establishment of His Kingdom and the destruction of Satan's empire. "Tremble thou earth at the presence of the God of Jacob." This is the great remedy for earth's woes. This is the healing balm for the poor groaning creation.—Rom. 8:19-22.

When Christ is King.

What wonderful changes will then be brought about; instead of the wicked prospering like a green bay tree ("Now we call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.") Mal. 3:15. we read—"Then shall the righteous flourish." He shall judge among the people and save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor.—Psa. 72.

Instead of delusions and snares of the adversary, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with its healing beams, to bring light and life to the willing and obedient.

Instead of the broad road to destruction, on which the human family has been teeming into death, there shall be the Highway of Holiness leading to health and life.

Instead of the spirit of Satan, selfishness and pride, jealousy, envy, and strife, there will be the Spirit of Christ, of love, joy, peace, and righteousness.

Instead of the muddy waters of tradition, false doctrine, and death, Jordan will be driven back, for Isaiah 25:7-9 declares: "He will destroy in this mountain (kingdom) the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces . . . and it shall be said in that day, 'Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"

Instead of Jordan's waters of death, there will be the stream of living waters. "The stream, the waters thereof shall make glad the city of God."

Instead of the earth being covered with the sea of trouble, "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee," and "the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the great deep."

The picture in our Psalm is of Israel being delivered from Egypt and Pharaoh, illustrating the deliverance of the world from Satan, sin and death.

When God undertakes to deliver, nothing can prevent, nothing can hinder His purpose. "The sea saw it and fled." Israel went over in safety, and Pharaoh and his hosts were swallowed up in the Red Sea; representing Satan and his servants,

evil spirits and all incorrigible sinners, who will be destroyed in the second death. Then Moses sang the song of Exod. 15:15, 16: "Fear and dread shall fall upon them by the greatness of thine arm, they shall be as still as a stone."

The present social upheaval in the world is likely to develop so as to involve all phases of society—religious and civil—all will fear and dread, and then finally come to recognise that it is God's Kingdom which is operating, that is casting down the present institutions; the mountains (kingdoms) are skipping like rams; the little hills (princedom and lesser governments), like lambs. It was reported that within one week nearly 300 royalties had been dethroned or had fled, including kings, queens, princes, princesses, dukes, etc. What ailed them? The same thing that will cause the sea to flee and Jordan to turn back. "Tremble thou earth at the presence of the God of Jacob." "The Gentile times are ended, and their kings have had their day."

Let us now again turn to our Psalm (114) verses 1, 2: When the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt; "Judah was his sanctuary, Israel his dominion." So Judah represents the Church of the living God. "The tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 21:3, 4.

Judah represents the ruling class. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—Gen. 49:10.

So to the Church of Christ the promise is—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in

my throne." (Rev. 3:21.) "To him will I give power over the nations." (Rev. 2:26.) "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32.) "If we suffer (with Him) we shall also reign with him."—2 Tim. 2:12.

Israel His Dominion.

Israel represents the whole human family. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Psa. 72:8.) All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's and he is governor among the nations.—Psa. 22: 26-28.

Verses 3-6: The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God—the sanctuary class—(Judah his pleasant plant). Now the desire of all nations is at hand, all have longed for this glorious day, yet not knowing what it was they needed.

The conditions of that reign of righteousness are such that every good heart will respond thereto, for "He will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet." (Isa. 28:17.) And, when thy judgments are abroad in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:9.

"Behold my servant whom I uphold mine elect in whom my soul delighted; I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the nations . . . a bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth."—Isa. 42:1-3.

So the rule of Satan and selfish governments shall cease. Earth's rightful King shall reign and pros-

per. He will speak to the boisterous sea. "Peace, be still." the restless masses will cease their foment and agitation. "There shall be no more sea," no more confusion, no more strife. "Wars shall cease, and perfect peace shall flourish everywhere."

Thou rulest the raging of the sea, when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them.—Psa. 89:9.

So the sea shall flee away. The autocratic powers, governments, kingdoms, shall skip out of the way and the King of kings, the Great Physician, shall bring the Balm of Gilead, and heal all earth's woes. He will reward the obedient with health and life, and thus Jordan's stream will be driven back, and death will gradually cease. Even the prison house of death will be opened, and all in the grave shall be called forth, then it shall be true—"O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

Verse 7: No wonder that the earth is trembling, for it is the great day of God Almighty, it is the day of vengeance against all unrighteous systems—religious, social, and national.—Psa. 97:1-4.

Verse 8 brings the glad news that not only will Jordan's waters of death cease to flow, be driven back, but that instead there shall be the fountain of living waters to which whomsoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. (Rev. 22:17.) The rock of ages has been smitten; the living waters are already flowing; the saints have been drinking, during this Gospel age; now all are to be invited. "Whosoever will, let him come."

Berean Questions.

1. What is meant by the curse?

Answer.—The consequent conditions as the result of sin's penalty. Rev. 21:4; Isa. 25:8; Rev. 22:3.

2. When will sin be blotted out

Answer.—Acts 3:19; Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:10.

3. Why should we understand the stream Jordan to represent death?

Answer.—Jesus was baptised in Jordan unto death. Mark 1:9; Psa. 114:5; Zech. 11:3; Jos. 3:15-17.

4. Does the stream of death embrace the whole race of mankind?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Rom. 5:12-21; Rom. 8:22.

5. Where do we find the hope of deliverance?

Answer.—Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; Gen. 22:18; Psa. 9:7, 8; Psa. 72:1-7; Isa. 11:1-9; Isa. 35:10.

6. What does "sea" represent in the Bible?

Answer.—Psa. 46:3; Isa. 28:2; 57:20, 21.

7. Is Jordan's stream (death) to be destroyed?

Answer.—1 Cor. 15:26, 54, 55; Rev. 20:14; Rev. 22:3.

8. Was Adam's sin, which started the human race on Jordan's stream (death), a sin of ignorance or wilfulness?

Answer.—1 Tim. 2:14; Gen. 2:16, 17.

9. Does God expect us to believe anything unreasonable?

Answer.—Isa. 1:18; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:21; Heb. 11:1.

10. What has been the effect of "Christian" creeds and dogmas upon the people?

Answer.—2 Cor. 4:4, 5; Gal. 1:8.

11. What will be the effect of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness?

Answer.—Mal. 4:2; Rom. 11:25-28; Jer. 31:31-34.

12. What is the "broad road," what is the "narrow way," and what is the "highway"?

Answer.—Matt. 7:13, 14. Broad way.—Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:10, 23. Narrow way.—Matt. 10:37, 38; Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:17; John 12:24-26 (R.V.) High way.—Isa. 35:8; Isa. 40:3-5; Isa. 62:10, 11; Jer. 31:21.

13. Quote Scriptures indicating or illustrating how the restless masses can be brought under control.

Answer.—Psa. 46:9, 10; Isa. 2:4; Luke 8:22-25; Matt. 14:22-23; Psa. 72:3, 4.

14. Are there any Scriptures indicating further probation after Christ comes?

Answer.—Acts 15: 16-17; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:25, 26; Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 3:8, 16, 29; Psa. 2:8; Psa. 22; 27, 28.

15. While Jordan's stream means death and deception, what other streams symbolise life and truth?

Answer.—Psa. 48:4; Rev. 22:1, 17.

STUDY XVIII.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:7.

Peace is defined to be a state of quiet, or tranquillity, freedom from disturbance or agitation—calmness, repose. Such a state of mind our text affirms of God. His is a mind tranquil, calm, undisturbed, never agitated, nor even wearied, nor perplexed by any of the cares of His vast dominion. Yet this perfect peace of God, the Scriptures show, is due neither to the fact that there are no disorders in His vast domain, nor yet to any stocial indifference to pain or pleasure, but rather to that perfect poise of His glorious attributes which makes Him Master of His situation as Sovereign of the whole universe.

Have we admired the coolness and calm self-possession of a great general, such as Grant or Napoleon, in the midst of confusion and smoke of battle? Or of a great statesman, such as Gladstone or Bismarck, in the midst of national perplexities and perils? Or of skilled physicians or others in critical times and places? These are only faint illustrations of the peace of self-possession and self-confidence which rules in the mind of God. He is never confused, bewildered, perplexed, anxious or care-worn, nor in the least fearful that His plans will miscarry or His purposes fail, because all power and wisdom inhere in Him.

The scope of His mighty intellect reaches to the utmost bounds of possibility, comprehends all causes and discerns with precision all effects; con-

sequently, He knows the end from the beginning, and that, not only from philosophical principles, but also by intuition. As the Creator of all things, and the originator of all law, He is thoroughly acquainted with all the intricate subtleties of physical, moral and intellectual law, so that no problem could arise, the results of which are not manifest to His mind. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."—1 John 1:5.

God, the Creator of all things, is also the competent Sustainer of all things. In silent grandeur, from age to age, the whole physical universe fulfils His will, without a suspicion of disorder or mishap; and the same power is pledged for its sustenance throughout the eternal future.

Thus from His own vast, inherent resources of power and wisdom, springs the peace of God. But not from this source alone is the divine peace; for peace is the certain concomitant of inherent goodness. God is the impersonation of every virtue and every grace; and consequently He has the blessed satisfaction and peace of conscious moral perfection as well as inherent wisdom and power.

God's Emotional Nature.

Yet we find this peace of God co-existing with much of disorder and trouble. As a Father He shows us that He bears a Father's love to all His intelligent creatures—"the whole family [of God] in heaven and in earth"—and that for His "pleasure they are and were created." (Eph. 3:15; Rev. 4:11.) He created them in His own likeness—with the same mental and moral attributes, so that He might have communion and fellowship with them as sons, and they with Him as a Father, that thus, in mutual fellowship and communion, the Creator and the creature might find pleasure, happiness and delight.

This likeness of God includes in all not only the same mental faculties, but also the free exercise of the same in the formation of character. A creature incapable of thus forming character would not be in God's likeness. And for the purpose of developing character, the alternative of good and evil must be placed before him. The right and the wrong principles of action must be discerned and the individual left free to his own choice in the matter, that the pleasure of God may be realised in the virtuous character resultant from the free choice of righteousness.

Since the love of God for His newly-created and innocent creatures is akin to, but much stronger than, the love of an earthly parent for an innocent infant; and since that loving interest and solicitude does not grow cold as the creature advances in years, but earnestly watches for the development of the principles and fruits of righteousness, it is manifest that, like an earthly parent, God experiences the sense of either pleasure or pain according as His free, intelligent creatures choose the right course or the wrong. Of this we are fully assured, not only by thus reasoning from the fact of His Fatherhood, but also by all of those Scriptures which speak of some things as abominable, displeasing, hateful, and despicable to Him and as giving Him no pleasure; which say that His anger burns against them and that His indignation and wrath wax hot, even to their destruction. Other Scriptures speak of His pleasure, love, joy, and delight, in pleasing things—in the principles of righteousness and those who obey them—the appreciation of pleasurable emotions of an opposite character, for pain and pleasure may properly be considered the ebb and flow of the same emotion.

These exhibitions of the mind of God indicate clearly an emotional nature in the Divine Being,

of which fact we might also judge from the realisation of our own emotional nature, since man was created in God's image. No, God is not a God of stocial indifference, insensible to the emotions of pleasure and of pain; but the perfect poise of His attributes preserves the equilibrium of peace under all circumstances, whether of pain or pleasure.

God's Peace Unbroken by External Discord.

With this thought, then, let us consider the circumstances under which the marvellous peace of God has been perpetually maintained. The deep-laid plan of God in all His creative works required long aions [ages] for its accomplishment. Across the vista of ages He saw in His purpose the glory of an intelligent creation in His own likeness, established in righteousness and worthy of His gift of eternal life. He therein saw the mutual pleasure of the Creator and the creature, and with a peaceful patience He resolved to wait for the glorious consummation.

As the plan developed and time rolled on, the free moral agency of His creatures, misused by some, was enabling them to develop evil characters. By this means discord was introduced into His family—"the family [of God] in heaven and in earth"—all His creatures, angels and men; and the family was divided, some holding to righteousness and some choosing to do evil. But such a contingency was one of the foreseen necessities of the far-reaching plan, the glorious outcome of which was, in the divine judgment, worth the cost of all the trouble and loss which He foresaw.

What a dreadful thing is family discord. How a prodigal son or wayward daughter often brings the grey hairs of the human parent down with sorrow to the grave! Ah, the heavenly Father

knows something of such sorrow; for He saw Satan, one of His sons (Isa. 14:12), an angel of light, fall as lightning from heaven. (Luke 10:18.) For six thousand years, at least, that son has been in open, defiant rebellion against God, and most actively and viciously engaged in inciting further rebellion and wickedness. He saw many of the angels leave their first estate (Jude 6) and become the allies of Satan, and then He also saw the whole human race fall into sin. Did ever any human parent find such a conspiracy—so virulent and hateful—spring up in his family? Surely not!

Then God found it necessary to perform the unpleasant duties of discipline. In His justice He must disown the disloyal sons and deal with them as enemies. Though all the while His Fatherly love was preparing to bless the deceived and fallen ones when the purposes of redemption should restore the repentant to His favour, love must be veiled, while only stern, relentless justice could be manifested. This has been no happifying duty, nor has the attitude of the sinner been pleasing to Him.

Consider the love against which these recreants sinned. Though from God cometh every good and perfect gift, His favours have been despised, His love spurned, His righteous authority conspired against and defied, His character maligned, misrepresented, made to appear odious, hateful, unrighteous, and even despicable. Yet, through it all the peace of God continues, and for six thousand years He has endured this contradiction of sinners against Himself. And still, O wondrous grace! His love abounds; and it is written that He so loved the world, even while they were yet sinners, that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for them; and that through Him judgment (trial) is also to be extended to those angels that fell, with the ex-

ception of Satan, the leader and instigator of the whole conspiracy—the father of lies.—John 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 20:10, 14.

God's Peace Compatible with Sorrow.

This gift of divine love was another indication of the cost to our heavenly Father of His great and marvellous plan. Not only did He behold the fall into sin of a large proportion of His family, but their recovery cost the sacrifice of the dearest treasure of His heart, and the subjection of that beloved One to the most abject humiliation, ignominy, suffering and death. Again the illustration of a parent's love assists us in comprehending the cost of this manifestation of Jehovah's love. With what tender and yearning emotions of love must He have made this sacrifice of His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased? In addition to all the graces of character manifested since the very dawn of the being of the Logos, was now added the further grace of full submission to the divine will, even when the pathway pointed out was one of humiliation and pain.

Ah, did the Father let Him go on that errand of mercy without the slightest sensation of sorrowful emotion? Had He no appreciation of the pangs of a Father's love when the arrows of death pierced the heart of His beloved Son? When our dear Lord said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and again, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," did it touch no sympathetic chord in the heart of the Eternal? Yes, verily; the unfeigned love of the Father sympathetically shared the Lord's sorrow.—Matt. 26:38, 39.

The principle taught in the divine Word, that true love weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice, is one which is also exemplified in the divine character. The immortal

Jehovah could not Himself die for us, His divine nature being proof against death. And even if He could have died, there would have been no higher power to raise Him out of death. Thus all creation would have been left forever without a Governor, and only disaster and ruin could have ensued. But God could and did sacrifice at great cost to His loving, Fatherly nature, the dearest treasure of His heart; and thus He manifested (1 John 4-9) the great love wherewith He loved His deceived and fallen creatures. If this sacrifice cost Him nothing, if it were impossible for His mind to realise any painful emotion, even under such a circumstance, then the gift of His Son would be no manifestation of His love; for that which costs nothing, manifests nothing.

Our Lord Jesus also manifested His great sympathy for the Father in the misrepresentation of His character, which He has so patiently endured for ages. It was the one effort of His life to glorify the Father and to rectify among men the false impressions of His glorious character—to show to men His goodness, benevolence, love and grace, and to lead them to love the merciful God who so loved them, even while they were yet sinners, as to seek them out and to plan for their eternal salvation.

God's Peace Self-Centred.

Yes, there has been great commotion in the disrupted family of God—commotion in which the Lord declares He has had no pleasure (Psa. 5:4); but, nevertheless, the peace of God has never been disturbed. In the full consciousness of His own moral perfection, His unerring wisdom, His mighty power, and with the fullest appreciation of justice and the keenest and most ardent love of the beauty of holiness, patiently and peacefully, He has en-

dured the contradiction of sinners against Himself for six thousand years.

But during the seventh millennium, according to the divine purpose, it will be the joyful privilege of our Lord Jesus fully to manifest to all creatures in heaven and in earth the Father's glorious character. Then will the Father rejoice in the grandeur of His finished work and in the everlasting peace and happiness of His family in heaven and on earth, "reunited under one head."—Eph. 1:10. (Diaglott).

This blessed consummation will not be realised, however, until the incorrigible fallen sons of God, disowned and disinherited because they loved unrighteousness, and would not be reclaimed, shall have been cut off. This will be the last unpleasant duty of the Creator and Father of all, who positively declares that it is a sad duty, yet nevertheless one which He will have the fortitude to perform in the interests of universal righteousness and peace. Hear Him: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"—Ezek. 33:11.

Thus we see that the peace of God is compatible with great emotion and with sorrow and pain of any kind; for it is not dependent upon outward circumstances, but upon the proper balancing of the mind and the conditions of a perfect heart. Such peace—the peace of God—was enjoyed also by our Lord Jesus in the midst of all the turmoil and confusion of His eventful earthly life. And this brings us to the consideration of our Lord's legacy to His disciples, when He was about to leave the world, as expressed in His own words:—

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth [in stinted measure or

in perishable quality], give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:27.

Our Lord's Last Will and Testament.

Thus with abounding compassion and tenderness, did our Lord, on the last night of His earthly life, bestow upon His beloved disciples His parting blessing, His legacy of peace. It was the richest legacy He had to bequeath, and was one of priceless value. It was the promise of that tranquility of soul, that rest and ease of mind, which He Himself possessed—the peace of God. It was the same peace which the Father has Himself always enjoyed, even in the midst of all the commotion which the permission of evil has brought about; but it was not derived from the same source. In Jehovah this peace was self-centred; He realised in Himself the omnipotence of power and wisdom; while the peace of Christ was centred, not in Himself, but in God, by faith in His wisdom, power and grace. So also if we would have the peace of God, the peace of Christ—"My peace"—it must, like His, be centred in God by faith.

Yes, the peace of Christ was a priceless legacy. Yet how quickly the stormcloud of trouble, which was even then growing very dark, burst in its fury upon the heads of those very disciples to whom the words were directly addressed. It followed almost immediately the gracious bequest, and struck consternation, bewilderment, confusion, to their hearts and shook their faith from centre to circumference. Then, where was the peace? While the Lord was speaking the words, the foul betrayer, Judas, was out on his murderous errand. Then followed the agony in Gethsemane, and the terror and consternation among the disciples as they began to realise the fate of their beloved Lord. Soon their almost

breathless suspense deepened into more fearful forebodings as He stood alone before His merciless accusers and persecutors in the Hall of Pilate and the Court of Herod, while they were powerless to shield Him. Then came the tragic end—the horrors of the crucifixion.

What Had Become of the Peace?

Where was the promised peace under such circumstances—when, overcome with fear and dread, they all forsook Him and fled; and when St. Peter, although anxious to defend Him, was so filled with fear that three times he denied his Lord, and with cursing, declared that he never knew Him. The explanation is, that the peace had not yet come; for, as the apostle Paul tells us, “Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament [a bequest] is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” (Heb. 9: 16. 17.) But as soon as the tragic scene was over and the cry, “It is finished,” fell upon their eager ears, strange as it may seem, there is evidence that peace began to steal into their grieving hearts. The darkened heavens, the quaking earth, the rending rock, the torn veil of the Temple—all spoke to them a message of comfort which the world could not receive.

To the world (Jews and Gentiles, both participating in the crime) the language of these events was that of divine wrath and indignation against them. And as fear fell upon the people, and the clamour and excitement of that awful day died away, they smote upon their breasts and returned to their homes. The Roman centurion and they that were with him, fearing greatly, said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

But to the disciples of the Lord these events spoke a very different language. The cause of their blessed Master was their cause, and it was God's cause. To them these supernatural demonstrations were evidences that God was not regarding this matter with indifference; and though through the veil of darkness they could not read His bright designs, in these events there was to them a whisper of hope.

Three days later hope was revived by the news of our Lord's resurrection, confirmed to them by His appearance in their midst. Again, forty days later, hope was strengthened by His ascension after His parting counsel and blessing and promised return, and the instructions to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of adoption, not many days thence, at Pentecost. Then the peace of Christ the Lord's rich legacy, began to be realised, and the tarrying days of prayer and expectancy were days of abiding peace—peace which flowed as a river. But when, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Comforter came, the river of their peace found a deeper bed; and their joy knew no bounds!

"Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its glad increase.
Perfect; yet it floweth fuller every day;
Perfect; yet it groweth deeper all the way."

Our Rich Legacy of Peace.

But not alone to the early Church was this legacy of peace bequeathed. It is the blessed inheritance of the entire Church, even to the end of the age. The Lord showed His thought for us all on that very day, when in His prayer He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all those who shall believe on me through their word."—John 17:20.

The peace promised, observe, is not the short-lived peace of the world which is sometimes enjoyed

for a little season—while fortune smiles, and friends abound, and health endures, but which quickly vanishes when poverty comes in and friends go out, when health fails and death steals away the treasures of the heart. “My peace,” the peace of God which Christ Himself by faith enjoyed, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, who lost friend after friend, and in His last hour was forsaken by all of the few that remained—His peace endured through loss, persecution, scorn and contempt, and even amidst the agonies of the cross. This peace is something which none of the vicissitudes of the present life can destroy, and which no enemy can wrest from us.

What richer legacy could the Lord have left His beloved people? Suppose He had bent his energies during His earthly life to the accumulation of money; and that in so doing He had amassed an immense fortune to leave in the hands of His disciples wherewith to push forward the great work of the age when He should be taken from them; money to pay the travelling expenses of the apostles and to defray the numerous expenses incidental to the starting of the work in various places, such as the renting of lecture rooms, the payment of salaries to travelling brethren, etc., etc. How soon would it all have vanished, and how poor would be our inheritance to-day! “The man of sin” would surely have gotten hold of it in some way, and not a vestige of the legacy would have reached this end of the age. But, blessed be God, His rich legacy of peace still abounds to His people!

The peace promised is not such as the world can always recognise and appreciate; for the possessor of it, like the Lord Himself, and like the heavenly Father as well, may have a stormy pathway. Indeed that it must be so to all the faithful until the purposes of God in the permission of evil are

accomplished, we are distinctly forewarned, but with the assurance that through all the storms this peace shall abide—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace."

Faith the Basis of Peace.

If we would know the foundation and security of this abiding peace which is able to survive the heaviest storms of life, we have only to look to the teaching and example of the Lord and the apostles. What was it that held them so firmly and gave them such rest of mind while they suffered? It was their faith—their faith in the love, power, and wisdom of God. They believed that what God had promised, He was able also to perform, and that His righteousness and benevolent plan could know no failure. By the mouth of His prophets He had declared, "My counsel shall stand, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." "The Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isa. 46:9-11; 14:27.) On the assurances of God they rested. In Him their faith was anchored; and it mattered not how fiercely the storms raged or how they were tossed by the tempests of life while their anchor still held fast to the throne of God.

The language of our Lord's faith was. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee." He had been with the Father from the beginning, had realised His love with His goodness, and had seen His power, and had marked His righteousness and His loving kindness and Fatherly providence over all His works. And so it is written, "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53:11.) The knowledge which He had of the Father gave to Him a firm footing for faith in all God's purposes concerning the future. Hence

He could and did walk by faith. And that faith enabled Him to overcome all obstacles and to secure the victory even over death.

So also it is written for our instruction—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"—that faith in God built, in our case, upon our Lord's testimony of the Father; and again it is written that, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is only through steady, unwavering faith that the peace of God—the peace of Christ—will abide with His people. While the Lord was with His disciples, and they saw in Him the manifestation of the Father, their faith was strong and they had peace in Him, as He said, "While I was in the world I kept them." But not until after He had left them was their faith anchored in God. After Pentecost they experienced the same peace that Christ had enjoyed—the blessed peace that came from a knowledge of the fact that God acknowledged them as sons and heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ, if they would continue faithfully to follow in the steps of the Redeemer.

Cultivation of Unwavering Faith.

Herein is also the basis of our peace. No matter how fiercely the storms of life may assail us, we must never let go our anchor and allow ourselves to drift, but always remember that "the foundation of God standeth sure;" that "His truth is our shield and buckler;" that "what He had promised He is able also to perform," notwithstanding our human imperfections and frailties; that covering these we have the imputed righteousness of Christ, our Surety and Advocate; and that "the Father himself loveth" us, "He considereth our frame and remembereth that we are dust," and so has compassion for the sons of His love and is very pitiful and of tender mercy. Indeed, "What more can he say

to us he hath said," to assure our faith and to steady and strengthen our hearts to patient endurance in the midst of the trials and conflicts of the narrow way of sacrifice?

There is nothing which puts the Christian at greater disadvantage in the presence of his foes than for him to let go, even temporarily, his grip upon the anchor of faith. Let him do so for a moment, and of necessity darkness begins to gather round him. He cannot see the brightness of his Father's face; for "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and while he grapples again for the anchor, the powers of darkness fiercely assail him with doubts and fears. These attacks are generally based upon his human imperfections, which he should ever bear in mind are covered by the Robe of Christ's righteousness.

If we would have the peace of God reign in our hearts, we must never let go our anchor, "nor suffer Satan's deadliest strife to beat our courage down." The language of our hearts should always be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." With this faith the peace of God, the peace which the Master bequeathed to us, ever abides. Thus "the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus;" for it is written again, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

In the midst of the Christian warfare let our hearts be cheered and our minds be stayed, not only with such assurances that all the divine purposes shall be accomplished, but also with such promises of personal favour as these:—

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." "Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I

have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands." "The Father himself loveth you," and "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Such as are upright in their way are His delight." "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart"—the peace of God, even in the midst of storm and tempest.

Berean Questions.

1. Who only can enjoy peace?

Answer.—Rom. 5:1; Psa. 91; Psa. 118:165; Eph. 2:13-17; Isa. 32:17; Isa. 26:3; John 14:27; John 16:23.

2. To whom is peace impossible?

Answer.—Isa. 57:21; Psa. 7:11; Psa. 125:2; Isa. 59:8; Prov. 2:22.

3. How is it that God is at perfect peace even though the world is so full of trouble?

Answer.—Isa. 46:10; 14:24, 26; 55:11.

4. Has God been surprised by the course of human history?

Answer.—Isa. 46:10; 48:3, 5, 7; 14:27.

5. What are the qualities of Jehovah?

Answer.—Psa. 63:3; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 John 1:9; Psa. 145:17; Jer. 3:12; Psa. 116:5; Luke 6:36; James 5:11; Numbers 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:9; Isa. 30:18.

6. In what way was man created in the likeness of God?

Answer.—He was an earthly image of a spiritual being, with reasoning power and moral intelligence, able to distinguish between right and wrong. 1 Tim. 2:14.

7. Has man a free will?

Answer.—Yes. Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 3:6.

8. What is necessary on man's part in order that he may again enjoy communion with God?

Answer.—Heb. 11:6; Heb. 10: 6-10; Matt. 9:13; 1 Sam. 15:22.

9. Does God suffer grief?

Answer.—Psa. 103:13; Isa. 63:9; Judges 10:16; Gen. 6:6; Psa. 95:10.

10. Who was the first rebel amongst God's creation?

Answer.—John 8:44; Isa. 14:13, 14.

11. Did God foreknow all that would happen?

Answer.—Acts 15:18; Matt. 13:35; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8.

12. Why was it necessary that Jesus should suffer such humiliation and degradation in His death?

Answer.—Heb. 5:8, 9; Heb. 4:15; Heb. 2:10; Gal. 3:13; Gal. 4:5; 1 Pet 2:24.

13. Why was it impossible for God to die for man?

Answer.—God is immortal, a condition in which death is an impossibility. John 5:26.

14. Why then is God referred to as "the Saviour of all men"? 1 Tim. 4:10.

Answer.—Because He is the author of the great plan of salvation. Psa. 49:15.

15. If it was impossible for God to die, how was it possible for the Son to die?

Answer.—John 1:14; Heb. 2:9, 14, 16; 1 Cor. 15:21; Gal. 4:4.

16. Is there anything in the Bible claiming that the Father and Son are equal

Answer.—No. John 14:28; Phil. 2:6 (Diaglott); 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Cor. 11:3.

17. Where do we find that Jesus also possessed this wonderful peace of God?

Answer.—John 16:32, 33; John 14:27.

18. When did the apostles receive the legacy of peace left them by the Lord?

Answer.—Acts 1:5-8; Acts 2:1-4.

19. Will this legacy of peace left to the Church ever be enjoyed by the world in general?

Answer.—Zech. 9:10; Luke 2:10-14.

20. What is the foundation of the "peace that passeth understanding"?

Answer.—1 John 4:15-18; Heb. 10:22.

21. What rich promises assure us of God's love, guidance and protection

Answer.—John 16:23; Matt. 28:20; Psa. 32:8; Psa. 48:14; Prov. 3:5, 6.

22. Should this assurance of His love and mercy create in us any laxity or carelessness in carrying out our consecration?

Answer.—Col. 4:2; Phil. 2:13, 14.

"Prove all things hold fast that which is good."

STUDY XIX.

THE WORLD AS IT IS—AS IT WILL BE.

What a world this is! Certainly it is very different to what it was. Indeed, if our grandparents, and with some of us even, if our parents were to be brought back from the tomb, they would probably at first think they had awakened on a different planet altogether. What wonderful changes have taken place. Our grandparents could look back to the time when there were no railway trains, no telegraphs, nor the numberless inventions for the comfort and labour-saving devices which we have, let alone the many new wonders of recent years, in airships, aeroplanes, motors, wireless, X rays, etc. Little over 100 years ago the quickest way to travel was on horseback; now it is quite usual to go 60 miles an hour by train, and by aeroplane it is now possible to travel at about 300 miles an hour.

It is not necessary to say more; these things are what we see and read of day by day. The point to notice is that for about 5900 years the world went on without all this knowledge and these conveniences. In fact, it would appear that much knowledge possessed by the ancients of 4000 years ago has been gradually lost. For instance, there was a wonderful civilisation in Egypt. The Egyptians were wonderful artificers in carvings, in colours and experts in scientific matters. They had some secret mode of making flexible glass and staining glass, and the great Pyramid of Gizeh is still one of the wonders of the world with its wonderful stones, so large that even to-day we have no machinery capable of lifting them; yet they are so evenly surfaced and placed so accurately that it is

not possible to even thrust a knife between. Not only so, but its passage system is a wonderful illustration of the various Divine dispensations toward mankind in the different ages of the world's history; and the scientific matters revealed in its construction all speak of much knowledge, that has been lost and which men have only in recent years been regaining. This, by the way, is one of the many evidences available that the present-day scientists who teach evolution are quite wrong. There is not any evidence whatever indicating that there has been the slightest advancement in human nature, either mentally or physically, for the past 6000 years. This has been admitted by Professor E. G. Conklin, of Harvard University of U.S.A., who has said: "Undoubtedly there have been minor changes in the human body; probably an increasing resistance to certain diseases due to the elimination of those persons who were more susceptible, as well as certain degenerative changes in sense organs, hair, teeth, and toes, but in bodily evolution man had made no marked progress for at least 20,000 years."

Just the contrary to evolution has been taking place ever since sin entered and death began to swallow up the human race. Man has been degenerating ever since that time. When mankind represented by our first parents disobeyed God, the Almighty left the human family to go its own way and take the consequences of their action. Instead, then, of God's law of love developing in their hearts and minds, the spirit of the adversary entered. Selfishness has developed all the bitter envyings, malice, hatred, strife, resulting in slavery and oppression; greed and ambition and jealousy have brought about wars and carnage, and morally the race has become weak and corrupt. Many had thought that the Churches were going to conquer

the world for Christ, and that men would by becoming converted get rid of the devilish spirit of selfishness, greed and lust, and receive instead the spirit of Christ, of brotherhood, and love, and that thus the angels' message of peace and goodwill would be fulfilled.

What is the Position To-day?

From a moral condition we have to confess that the Apostle's words, 2 Tim. 3: 1-5, are undoubtedly being fulfilled: "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." We note that these remarks are in respect to professing Christians, those having a "form of godliness," and if such be the case with those connected with churches, what of those who do not have any form of godliness? It is every clear that if the conversion of the world depended upon the churches the world would never be converted. Religion to-day is indeed at low ebb, but it is just what was predicted. Our Lord's own words were: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?" The Revelation of St. John also predicts that the church system at the seventh or last period of the church's history would have lost its power, its zeal, it would be rich in worldly goods, and sit as a queen, and lack nothing in its own eyes, but in the eyes of "the faithful and true witness," they are "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked," and he declares: "Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth."—Rev. 3: 14-22.

The Industrial Viewpoint.

Many now living can look back at the oppressive conditions under which men, women and children slaved. Men were expected to do farm work and rear families on about 15/- a week. Men worked from about 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. day by day for £1 a week. Dock labourers would receive 3/6 or 4/- per day, and might sometimes get a full week, but often only a day or two. They, with their families, lived in the evil-smelling stone-floored homes of the slums, in living uncomfortableness, with no chance to hope for better days. Women and children even, of 9 or 10 years of age, had to work in any possible way under terrible conditions and all hours. Well did St. Paul describe the human race under the curse of sin and death as "the poor groaning creation." What a mercy it is that such conditions have been greatly alleviated in our day. Yet how unsatisfactory are matters at present. Although everyone is so much better off although the working man to-day may enjoy comforts and luxuries, unthought of by kings and the wealthy of days gone by, yet there was never so much dissatisfaction, so much unrest, and "men's hearts are to-day failing for what is coming on the earth."

The world to-day is facing a great climax. The working class has gained much power, and by united efforts they have lifted themselves out of the abject slavery of a few years ago, and while there are some splendid men in their ranks who would guide along lines of moderation and wisdom, these cannot control the rank and file.

There is an undercurrent of anarchy. Communism has honeycombed the masses, and the spirit of recklessness and vengeance is often displayed. In fact, there is every evidence that the world's crisis is fast approaching, as foretold by Daniel 12:1.

The Time of The End.

As before intimated, all this change in the world is of recent date. Until the sixteenth century, and the time of the great Reformation, the world had grovelled along going from bad to worse in ignorance, superstition, oppression and degradation. With the invention of the printing press and the awakening by the Reformation, the way was being prepared for the great developments of the present. The Wesley movement, too, was a great factor in the enlightening process, leading men to feel after something better in the way of conditions. Then came the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Pope of Rome was defied and taken to France as a prisoner, where he died. The great power of the Papacy, the foe of all progress towards light, liberty and truth was broken. The people began to taste liberty, and have ever since been gradually attaining it.

From 1800 A.D. the knowledge of God's Book began to go out into the world. Bible Societies were formed, and where the Bible goes, knowledge increases and liberty comes. It was during the nineteenth century that the great and successful missionary enterprises were undertaken, and the Bible sent into every land and nation in the world. It is then since 1800 that all these wonderful inventions have come about, and that men have "run to and fro" as never before, and knowledge in every department of science, mechanics, agriculture, medicine, surgery, etc., has been, and still is, increasing, so that it would be unreasonable to deny the fact, that we are living in the "time of the end" mentioned in Daniel 12: 1-4.

What is the World Coming To.

Many have had very crude ideas respecting the "end of the world," and have taught that the literal

earth is to be burned up, and that, all in a single twenty-four hour day. Such a conclusion is quite contrary to the Scripture, for how could the Lord's Prayer have any fulfilment—"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven"? How could the promise to Israel ever be fulfilled which says that they shall be gathered again to their own land, and never again be plucked up out of their land? (Amos 9: 14-15.) But there are so many promises that would fail, too numerous to refer to: just, for instance, that to Abraham: "In blessing I will bless thee, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 17: 1-12); and to Noah, after the flood, the Lord said: "I will not again curse the earth any more for man's sake . . . neither will I again smite every living thing as I have done" (Genesis 8: 21-22). On the other hand, the Scripture definitely declares "The earth abideth for ever."

There are figurative Scriptures which have been misunderstood, and led to erroneous thought that the literal earth is to be destroyed by fire. When, however, we make a careful examination of the usage of the words earth, world, and heavens, and "rightly divide the word of truth," we find that all is harmonious. If we follow the Apostle's reasoning in 2 Peter 3, we shall see that it is the same kind of heavens and earth which is to be destroyed by fire, as the "heavens and earth" which at the time of Noah were destroyed by the great Flood. The literal earth was not destroyed in Noah's day, nor were the literal heavens, but "earth" represents the social or national arrangements and the "heavens" represents the religious elements or spiritual powers. These did pass away at the deluge, and a new earth or arrangement of society commenced, and the angels who had proved unfaithful in the days prior to the flood were no longer permitted

to materialise and walk about as men, and marry the daughters of men. (Genesis 6 and Jude 6). A new spiritual arrangement, a new heavens began. The present heavens and earth, the social, industrial national arrangements and spiritual and religious powers, the present evil world of which Satan has been the prince, will pass away with a great noise. Then the Apostle assures us, "we look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is the changing time we are living in, the time when the present social, industrial, financial structure will break up and be destroyed in a fiery time of trouble such as never has been, and when also the heavens shall pass away. The prophet Zephaniah (3: 8-9) tells how universal this fiery time of trouble will be: "The whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of God's jealousy, For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent."

Thus it is quite clear that the earth itself is not to be destroyed. It is the unjust,, unrighteous, cruel, selfish institutions of the earth that are to be burnt up, and then the poor "groaning creation" which, during this long night of sin, sorrow and oppression, has been "travailing in pain together until now" will realise that the "Desire of all nations" has come to deliver the world from all oppression, and bring in the happy day when the "wicked shall no longer prosper, but the righteous shall flourish as the palm."

The pure language of which the prophet Zephaniah (3: 8, 9) speaks is the message of the true Gospel, which will declare that Satan's dominion is overthrown, and that Christ has taken His great power and will bring in light and liberty, peace and goodwill among men, together with a clear understanding of God's purpose. "For God will have

all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2: 3-6.) That will be the due time for all to come to know the Lord, as it is promised, "For all shall know Me from the least unto the greatest," "For the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the great deep."

The question may arise as to why there has been such a long delay. Time and space will not permit us to fully explain all that we would wish, but we invite all who earnestly desire to understand the Bible and the purpose of God, more clearly to write to us for further literature or to explain any difficulty on these questions. We may just add, in conclusion, that the Scripture makes the matter plain, and that it was just and kind of God to condemn the whole race in Adam, so that all might also be justly redeemed by the one man, Christ, the second Adam—Rom. 5: 1-12; 1 Cor. 15: 21-28.

By this means man has first had an experience of the evil results of sin, and then he is to have an opportunity of turning from sin to serve the living God and inheriting life eternal. Had all been placed on trial, like father Adam, without experience, we would likely have done as he did, and thus have forfeited our lives, and as justice demands life for life, each sinner under such circumstances would have needed a separate redeemer. So, during the past 6000 years, man has been learning a sad lesson, while also the race has been increasing, each one getting not more than a short lifetime of experience.

In the meantime, the Divine scheme of salvation has been developing; certain features have progressed in the different dispensations, particularly from the Patriarchal Age, when the gospel was

preached to Abraham. In this way gradually God revealed His purpose of ultimately "blessing all the families of the earth," and also made selection of certain worthy characters such as mentioned in Hebrews 11, who shall be raised from the dead and be "princes in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16.)

In the Law dispensation, besides further revealing of His plan, He taught the principles of His throne, and selected the nation of Israel, the faithful of which people will be, when resurrected, the representatives of Christ's Kingdom on the earth.

Then came the Gospel Age, or Spiritual Age, which our Lord called the "Kingdom of Heaven," and the Apostle James explained that the purpose of this Age is "to take out a people for God's name." (Acts 15: 14-17.) Our Lord said it would be but "a little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom"; and all the Apostles explain that this class has quite a different hope to that of the rest of mankind. It is a heavenly hope, to be spiritual beings, to be with the Lord, to be like Him, and to see Him as He is. (1 John 3: 1, 2.) This class is the "Abrahamic seed," the "stars of heaven" class of that seed, which is to be joint heirs with Christ in His Kingdom to bless all the families of the earth. (Galatians 3: 9, 16, 27, 29).

Undoubtedly, we are living in the closing years of the Gospel Age; soon the full number of God's elect will be complete. Then the great time of trouble (Daniel 12: 1-4) will sweep over the earth, and level down society, and prepare men's hearts to seek the Lord. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He is the governor among the nations." (Psalm 22: 26, 27.)

Not only to-day do we see the clouds of trouble

gathering for the storm, but we see also the preparation for the coming Kingdom in the re-gathering of Israel to their ancient land. Soon the King (Christ) will take His great power to reign. The Church will be gathered home to reign with Him. The great multitude to serve before the throne will then take their place. Next will be the restoration of the ancient worthies and restored Israel to represent the Kingdom on earth, then will the whole human family return from the tomb and be brought to the knowledge of saving grace (Isa. 35: 10.) Thus all the willing and obedient will have the opportunity of going up the highway of holiness, and receive the reward of eternal life. (Acts 15: 14-17; Rom. 11: 25-27; 1 Tim. 2:3-6.)

Then will the prayer be answered, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." How different everything will be when there is no enemy of light and truth and righteousness to tempt men astray and to stir up war and strife, envy, ambition and greed, but when the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth prevails throughout the earth, when all the selfish walls of class and nation are broken down, when all men of every tribe form one great brotherhood, and when the sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings healing all earth's diseases, so that there shall be no more pain and no more death. The earth shall yield its increase, and every man may safely dwell under his own vine and fig tree. Gradually every form of evil will be stamped out, and there shall be nothing left to mar the happiness of a perfected race rejoicing in the bounteous and beautiful provisions of a glorious creator. Such will be the condition in the next age, or what is scripturally termed the new heavens and earth which the Apostle John prophetically saw in vision—"I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and the first

earth were passed away, and there was no more sea (symbol of unrest, discontent, trouble). And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem (the new government) coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'—Rev. 21:1-5.

How great has been the darkness which for centuries oppressed Christian people. In the Dark Ages, instead of studying God's Word, ecclesiastics busied themselves in arranging formulas of church service, creeds and dogmas, which only led to confusion and error. Now the Bible is opening up as never before, and it reveals a Divine purpose which satisfies both heart and mind.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea."

The present age has been for the purpose of taking out the Church to be associated with Christ in the work of "blessing all the families of the earth." Acts 15: 14-17.

So far it has been a narrow way of sacrifice and few have found salvation, but when Christ's Kingdom is established, there will be a new way opened up. "It shall be called the way of holiness . . . the wayfaring men, though simpletons, shall not err therein." Isaiah 35. Then the wide invitation

will go forth: "The Spirit and the Bride shall say come, and let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17; Gal. 3:16, 29. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

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